Evaluating Recreation Services

Making Enlightened Decisions

Fourth Edition

Karla A. Henderson
M. Deborah Bialeschki
Laurie P. Browne

Evaluating Recreation Services

Making Enlightened Decisions

Fourth Edition

Karla A. Henderson

M. Deborah Bialeschki

Laurie P. Browne

SAGAMORE ◆◆ VENTURE

Dedicated to Marge Scanlin, former Director of Research
for the American Camp Association and
Jane H. Adams, former Executive Director
of the California Park and Recreation Society

Contents

UNIT ONE—CRITERIA: Foundations for Evaluation and Research

UNIT THREE—EVIDENCE: Data Analysis

UNIT FOUR—JUDGMENT: Data Reporting

List of Tables and Figures

About the Authors

Karla A. Henderson, PhD, is currently professor emerita in the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management at North Carolina State University. Karla has given numerous presentations throughout North America, South American, Europe, Asia, African, and Australia and publishes regularly in a variety of journals in the field. Among her books are: *Both Gains and Gaps: Feminist Perspectives on Women's Leisure; Dimensions of Choice: Qualitative Approaches to Parks, Recreation, Tourism, Sport, and Leisure Research*; and *International Handbook of Outdoor Studies*. She was co-editor of *Leisure Sciences* for seven years and has contributed to the profession in many ways. She is a Fellow of the Academy of Leisure Sciences, American Academy of Parks and Recreation Administrators, and the World Leisure Academy. In 2011, Dr. Henderson was awarded an honorary Doctor of Science degree from the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada. In her free time, Karla enjoys volunteering at Rocky Mountain National Park, hiking, being amused by her two cats, playing in a community band, and travelling.

M. Deborah Bialeschki, PhD, is currently senior researcher with the American Camp Association (ACA), where she is involved in research focused on youth development and the camp experience. Prior to joining ACA, Deb was on the faculty at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill for 20 years until she retired in 2005 as professor emerita. She has authored 12 books, collaborated on 17 book chapters, and contributed over 150 articles and presentations in national and international journals and conferences. Deb has been editor of major research journals, has chaired national research conferences, and been elected to professional academies. She received academic awards, including the Tanner Faculty Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching from UNC-Chapel Hill and the SPRE

Distinguished Colleague Award. Deb's research has focused on youth development through outdoor/camp experiences, staff training and development, and gender issues in leisure and outdoor recreation. She contributes to her community through varied volunteer opportunities, plays in the community band, loves the outdoors, values her time with family and friends (including four-legged furry ones), and continues to search for the perfect s'more.

Laurie P. Browne, PhD, is the Director of Research for the American Camp Association, where she supports camps and other out-of-school time programs to evaluate their programs and communicate findings to their stakeholders. Prior to joining ACA, Laurie was assistant professor in the Department of Recreation, Hospitality, and Parks Management at California State University, Chico. She taught classes related to recreation program planning, research methods, and business operations, and served as president of the California Park and Recreation Association's Educators Section. Laurie earned her PhD at the University of Utah in parks, recreation, and tourism and has published scholarship related to youth development, camp operations, and teaching and learning in higher education. In her spare time, Laurie enjoys being outdoors with her favorite campers—her three kids, two dogs, and husband—in the fabulous mountains and desert of Utah.

Preface

To say we live in an information age is an understatement. As Alvin Toffler (1970) warned many years ago, people can become drowned in information but starved for knowledge. Professionals in any field of human services must have the means to access and assess information. Having information is not enough, however, unless that information can be applied and used. To organize and manage recreation services (i.e., all elements related to the various specialties in the field such as parks, tourism, sports, arts, therapeutic recreation, camping, event management), information is needed about people's preferences, needs, and behaviors and the programs, administrative structures, and resources that comprise the organizations. To build a body of knowledge and to document the value of recreation, systematic processes are necessary. Evaluation and research can provide information that will enable "enlightened decisions."

Evaluation is a process that each of us uses every day. You probably made a judgment about what you liked or didn't like when you saw the cover of this book and began to thumb through these pages. Although this type of intuitive evaluation is important, this book is about systematic evaluation and research that focuses specifically on identifying explicit evaluation criteria or research questions, collecting evidence or data, and making judgments about the value or the worth of something applied to service improvement or knowledge development.

Unfortunately, evaluation and research can strike terror in the hearts of some students and professionals. People are often afraid to do evaluations, fearful of what they might find. Research seems overly complex. Doing evaluations or research does not consist of any magic formula. Further, learning to do evaluations or research cannot be done overnight. The three of us are always learning something new about evaluation and research, as we hope to show in this fourth edition of this book. The more you learn about evaluation and research procedures, however, the easier they become. We hope you

will see how assessment, evaluation, research, and statistics can be valuable in making enlightened decisions as well as generating important knowledge.

This text will not make you an expert. It is intended, however, to provide an awareness and understanding of the need for evaluation and research in our profession. This book aims to provide a basic overview and working knowledge of procedures. Knowing basic steps in evaluation research and having some familiarity with evaluation and research tools can help you to begin a process of lifelong learning about systematic inquiry. Thus, this book will provide a primer that will enable you to use evaluation and research to become more experienced as you practice and apply the concepts and techniques.

This textbook is designed for upper-level undergraduates, beginning graduate students, and practitioners who wish to apply evaluation and research to their efforts. The text is written for students, but students are defined as anyone who is in a learning situation. Many professionals find that what they have learned makes the most sense once they are in the "real world" where they need to apply text material immediately to their situations.

This book consists of a discussion of the three main elements of evaluation and research divided into four logical units. The three parts are the thesis or the "trilogy" of a systematic process for evaluation or research—criteria (research questions), evidence (data), and judgment (interpretation).

Since the evidence section is mainly oriented to techniques, strategies, and research methods, we have divided it into two units on collecting data and analyzing data. Because evaluation uses a number of conceptual ideas and identified research applications, we have organized the chapters around specific topics. Sometimes it is useful to read about a particular concept and technique and reflect upon it before moving to the next idea. Other times you may want to turn to a particular chapter that will give information to address a specific problem.

We have made the assumption that most readers are in the recreation field, broadly conceived. We have used examples related to therapeutic recreation, youth agencies, community recreation, commercial businesses, tourism, sports, and camping and outdoor recre-

ation. Although not all of these examples will be directly applicable to your interest, we believe that in a field that shares the common goals of enhancing the quality of life for people through recreation and leisure, we can learn from each other. In most cases, the implications of evaluation to any one area of recreation can apply to other applied areas as well.

A number of people have influenced the writing of this textbook. We are most indebted to Pat Farrell and Herberta Lundegren (Penn State University) for the excellent evaluation book that they wrote many years ago. We used their model in the first edition of this book and have tried to build upon their framework with the inclusion of more examples of evaluation based on qualitative data and the use of technology. Other individuals in the field of parks, recreation, and leisure studies who have contributed to our understanding of evaluation are too numerous to mention here but are acknowledged throughout this book.

This book has evolved from our teaching evaluation and research methods to students over a number of years as well as our experiences as researchers and evaluators. We are indebted to all students and colleagues who have helped us learn how to teach these topics.

We hope that you as students and readers will evaluate this book favorably because you set criteria that valued a readable, understandable, and useful text and because you found evidence that supported those criteria.

UNIT ONE

Criteria

Foundations for Evaluation and Research

1.0 Introduction to Criteria

Beginning a text is not easy. Beginning a research or evaluation project isn't always easy, either. Because your anxiety might already be high, we dislike beginning on a theoretical note. Yet, a certain framework needs to be presented to provide a foundation for any type of systematic inquiry such as evaluation or research. In discussing evaluation and research, we are systematic with the procedures that we outline for you. It is sometimes more tempting to start in the middle of the process than at the beginning. Stephen Covey (1989) in his well-known book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, reminds us to "Begin with the end in mind." This idea is the mantra of this first unit.

To explore any type of systematic inquiry effectively, we as authors and you as readers must be on the proverbial "same page." Therefore, we start by providing a conceptual background. As a reader, of course, you can start wherever you would like, but we encourage you to ground yourself in a basic understanding of evaluation and research processes before you begin to collect data.

The goal of systematic evaluation and rigorous research is to make reliable, valid, useful, and enlightened decisions and interpretations. Of course, all of us are continually involved in a process of evaluation. How many times have you stuck your toes in a swimming

pool to test its temperature before jumping in? Simplistic as it may be, dipping your toes is a form of evaluation that will lead to a judgment or a decision about whether and how to enter the water. If only formal evaluations and research were as easy as sticking one's toes into the water and making a decision! Unfortunately, most evaluations in recreation are (and should be) more systematic and complicated than this intuitive example. In this book, we provide a process for systematic inquiry leading to effective evaluations and rigorous research.

This first unit sets a framework for evaluation and explores the aspects of determining criteria. In research, this aspect might be called developing research questions. We will use the term *criteria* to encompass the broad range of considerations necessary for establishing the purpose of an inquiry. In plain terms, what is it you want or need to know?

Although Unit One ("Criteria") is not the most "action-packed" unit, it is one of the most critical. One major problem with any type of inquiry is that sometimes evaluators do not take time to plan and ascertain the appropriate criteria to use. For example, by putting your toes into the swimming pool, you were using your sense of the water's temperature as a criterion, but many other criteria, such as water quality or depth, could have been measured by using some other process. Perhaps the pH level in a swimming pool is a more appropriate criterion to measure than temperature before you go swimming. Measuring the pH level with one's toes would not be appropriate if the criteria included a chemical balance check. Thus, an essential dimension of any project is making sure you are collecting evidence using the appropriate criteria or research questions.

Evaluation refers to making decisions based on identified questions or criteria and supporting evidence. Evaluation research includes the processes used to collect and analyze data or evidence. Research studies are described in relationship to evaluation projects in this text, but the major focus is on evaluation and its use. Since this text is primarily aimed at undergraduate students who are more likely to conduct evaluation projects in entry-level jobs, we refer to you as the evaluator. Research, however, shares many of the common techniques used in evaluation, so we discuss both in this book. Recreation services are the human service organizations and enterprises related to:

- Parks
- Recreation
- Tourism
- Event management
- Commercial, for-profit recreation
- Outdoors
- Education and informal learning
- Sports
- Therapeutic recreation
- Human and community development

Other specific terms will be defined throughout this book. In addition, we include a glossary of terms to assist you as you read the text.

In this first unit, we examine what evaluation is, its purposes, its relationship to research, and how the aspects of criteria, evidence, and judgment are defined and interrelated. We explore areas of evaluation within recreation services and the types of evaluation that might be done. Within these types we examine approaches and models that can be applied to evaluation or research. Further, we consider how evaluation systems, as well as evaluation and research projects, are designed. Finally, we address legal and ethical issues that may be encountered in conducting evaluations.

1.1 The Basic Question: What is Systematic Inquiry?

Most of us wish we lived in a perfect world. We want to get all A's because our schoolwork is of the highest quality. As recreation professionals, we want participants to experience many benefits from recreation programs. We want staff to perform their duties enthusiastically and appropriately, budgets to reflect cost-effectiveness, and people to flock to our programs. We don't want people to complain or doubt our abilities as recreation professionals.

In reality, however, our lives and our student or professional situations don't run perfectly all the time. We need to use the resources available to improve ourselves and make our organizations more effective. None of us will ever be perfect, but we can use the processes and techniques of systematic inquiry, in the form of evaluation and research, to help us make enlightened decisions and improve what we do, whether as practitioners or as scholars. We want to understand the world better through this systematic inquiry. We need logical and informed processes for using evaluation and research to improve something or add to a body of knowledge.

For the purposes of this text, we define evaluation as the systematic collection and analysis of data to address criteria and to make judgments. Effective evaluation means making decisions based on identified questions and supporting evidence. Other definitions exist that have slightly different interpretations. Generally, however, the goal of evaluation is to determine "what is" compared to "what should be." Similarly, research is the systematic collection and analysis of data to answer a theoretical question and contribute to a broad body of knowledge.

Doing evaluation or research is a bit like a mystery or like solving a crime. For example, when a robbery occurs, detectives use elements of criteria, evidence (or data), and judgment (or decisions). The criteria would be questions that they wish to answer: what was stolen, who stole it, and what was the motive. The evidence would include information such as statements from witnesses, an inventory of what was missing, and physical clues such as fingerprints. Based on what evidence is collected, a judgment can then be made about what was stolen, who took it, and probable cause. With those judg-

ments, an arrest can be made and justice can prevail. If detectives do not have enough evidence, the judgment or arrest is difficult to make. These same principles apply to evaluation and research.

Systematic (Formal) Evaluations

We are all continuously engaged in a process of intuitive evaluation. We say things to ourselves like, "The room is too hot," "I'm too tired to think," or "I wish I hadn't eaten so much for lunch." The evaluation we do in recreation agencies, although it may be intuitive on an everyday basis, can be more trustworthy when it is systematically designed. A camp director told us once, "I don't use evaluations. I just watch and listen and talk to campers and staff, and I find out all that I need to know." We acknowledge these important ways to evaluate, but we also believe that formal systematic evaluations that are purposeful, reliable, and valid need to be conducted within organizations from time to time.

A systematic evaluation process takes greater effort (in time and money) than informal evaluations, which rely on intuition or expert judgment. Systematic or formal evaluation, however, provides a rigor when outcomes are complex, decisions are important, and evidence is needed to make "enlightened" or informed decisions or interpretations.

The major purpose of evaluation is, therefore, to make decisions. We want to make the best possible decisions based on systematically gathering evidence related to a particular purpose or standard to use for decision-making. Evaluation provides information that can lead to decisions, interpretations, and action. Through evaluation, we try to improve or show the value of various aspects of recreation. We generate this information through the application of evaluation research methods and techniques.

Research and evaluation share common methods and a similar framework for making decisions. The differences between evaluation and research projects are described in more detail in the next chapter, but for now, keep in mind that the methods and tools for evaluation and research are the same. Methods and tools for systematic inquiry are used for data collection and analysis, regardless of whether evaluation or research are undertaken.

Thus, evaluation, as well as research, requires the systematic use of a framework of procedures and methods that include criteria (also known as hypotheses, research questions, guiding questions, working hypotheses, purposes, measures, or objectives), evidence (or data that are collected and analyzed using appropriate designs and methods), and judgment (or interpretations expressed in conclusions and recommendations). Therefore:

> ## Criteria + Evidence + Judgment = Evaluation

Evaluation Today

Evaluation ranges from perceptions of everyday living to formal systematic studies, all of which help to assess where we are, where we want to be, and how we can reach desired goals. Thus, evaluation might entail intuitive feelings and thoughts, expert judgments, descriptive qualitative and quantitative analyses, quasi-experimental designs, or experimental designs.

Nothing is wrong with intuitive evaluation, but it is generally not enough if professionals want to make sure decisions are credible. Expert judgments are frequently used in the recreation field when consultants provide information or accreditation teams visit facilities and make recommendations. Descriptive analyses include summaries of "what is" in an organization. These descriptions provide a basis for recommended changes. Quasi-experiments and true experiments are means to measure changes that occur because of a program or intervention.

Figure 1.1 provides a pictorial example of how evaluation might look as a continuum ranging from intuitive to formal systems. Each of these methods on the continuum for doing evaluations will be discussed in more detail in Unit Two.

Developing a system for evaluation, gathering resources, and conducting formal evaluations may be the basis for more efficient and effective operations, staff, and programs. This effort, in turn, results in increased recreational, educational, and personal benefits for children, youth, and adults. Effectiveness relates to changes or the results of a program or intervention. Efficiency implies how changes or results happen.
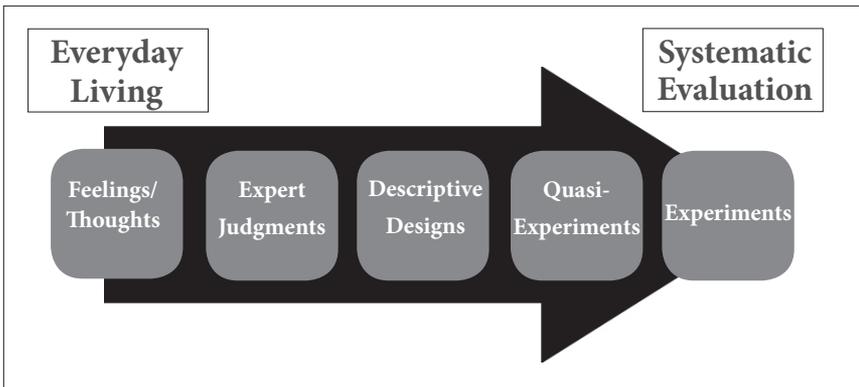
Figure 1.1. A Continuum of Evaluation

To focus on evaluation for improving effectiveness and efficiency in the conduct of all aspects of recreation services, several important characteristics of evaluation should be kept in mind:

1. Evaluation is a process. It consists of three dimensions: determining criteria, collecting and analyzing evidence, and making judgments and decisions.
2. The goal of evaluation is to make decisions by ascertaining value or worth. Decisions should be based on sound judgments and not on personal biases.
3. The most common way to evaluate is to measure and judge how well objectives are met. As you will see later in this text, however, this model is only one of many ways to conduct evaluations.
4. The results of evaluation should lead to decision-making about and for a specific situation or context. The results of research should lead to a contribution to the body of knowledge that has some generalizability or to new knowledge that can be applied across situations or contexts.
5. Evaluation may be informal or formal. Systematically and formally gathered data, however, are necessary for making the best decisions within most recreation organizations.
6. Evaluation within an organization should be ongoing with evaluation systems in place to address aspects of personnel (staff), program improvement, policy (administration), places (areas and facilities), and participant outcomes. Within these evaluations systems, particular evaluation projects may be undertaken.

7. Evaluation is continuous and does not necessarily occur only at the end of an event or activity. Evaluation may occur as an assessment to determine "what is" versus "what should be," formatively to examine processes, or summatively, to ascertain outcomes and impacts.

8. Evaluation is responsive, which means that it should address issues and concerns within an organization. Evaluation should have relevance to an organization and those people who make decisions in the organization. Research, on the other hand, should help in understanding the world better

9. No magic formulas for evaluation exist. Each evaluation or research project undertaken will be different than the previous one and should reflect the particular context within an organization.

Each of these ideas will be revisited throughout this unit and will be applied in the process of doing evaluations by using criteria, evidence, and judgment. As you will see, research also has many of the same purposes, but the primary focus of this book will be centered on evaluation as systematic inquiry.

From Ideas to Reality

In any professional situation, you have the choice of whether you want to evaluate or not. Most of us are continually engaged in a process of intuitive evaluation about staff, programs, facilities, policies, and participants, whether we are consciously aware of this or not. Many times this intuitive evaluation is not enough. Intuition is helpful but may not be unbiased or detailed. Often colleagues, participants, or other stakeholders in an organization want some type of systematic proof about something. It may be documented information concerning the performance of a staff member or it might be numbers that describe the average rating of satisfaction concerning a certain program activity. Thus, we need to collect these data based on criteria that will provide information to make judgments about something's worth and how it can be improved. Although many professionals believe that evaluation is "nice to do if we have time," the move toward greater accountability has challenged this perception with increased expectations by funders and participants for practices built upon solid evaluation processes.

Now that you have studied this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Write common definitions of "evaluation" and "research"
- Describe the importance of systematic formal evaluations
- Identify the characteristics of evaluation and research that lead to enlightened decisions

1.2 Evaluation and Research: Viva la Difference

This book is primarily about evaluation and the methods used to make decisions in recreation organizations. Anyone using this book, however, might also be interested in research projects as well. Frequently we see the words *research* and *evaluation* used together. Although many similarities exist in the processes of evaluation and research, differences exist in the outcomes of each.

Evaluation is defined as the systematic collection and analysis of data to address the worth or improvement of something. Research is generally defined as systematic investigation within some discipline undertaken to establish facts and principles to contribute to a body of knowledge. The goal of research is not necessarily to assist in practical decision-making, but to generate facts that might be generalized to a broader context. Both use scientific principles and methods to examine something. Both evaluation and research are characterized by clearly delineated ways of collecting, processing, and analyzing data.

Evaluation, however, is a specific form of applied research that results in the application of information for decision-making. *Assessment* is another term worth mentioning. Some argue that assessment and evaluation are different, but most use it interchangeably with evaluation. For the purpose of consistency, we will use the term *evaluation* throughout this book.

Therefore, we emphasize that evaluation and research use the same methods but have different purposes and outcomes. The scientific method, or the process of systematic inquiry, is not bound by purpose, so it can be applied in both evaluation projects and research studies. Evaluation projects use research methods but they do not have unique methods. Evaluation projects use the same basic rules of the scientific method. In this chapter we discuss the differences between evaluation and research as well as aspects of theory and literature review that are usually connected to research rather than evaluation.

Differences in Objectives or Purposes

The objectives or purposes of evaluation and research projects need to be discussed because they constitute one of the major differences between evaluation and research. First, research tries to prove or disprove hypotheses, whereas evaluation focuses on improvement in some area related to programs, personnel, policies, places and facilities, or participant outcomes. Researchers are usually concerned with increasing understanding, satisfying an inquiring mind, or finding scientific truth. Evaluators are concerned with problem solving and decision-making in a specific situation. The aim of research is new knowledge that may or may not be applicable immediately. This aim does not mean that research projects do not address problems and offer data for application, but these direct applications are not necessarily the outcome of the research project undertaken. Direct application is the purpose of doing evaluation projects.

Second, evaluation projects generally compare the results with an organization's goals to see how well the latter have been met. Research, by definition, applies scientific techniques to testing hypotheses or research questions focused on findings related to the testing of theory or theory generation. Theory allows for an explanation of findings that may be generalized beyond a particular context. Evaluators usually focus at the applied level for a particular situation and usually do not get into theory questions that might be generalized beyond a specific situation. Research involves inquiry based on a desire to know something in a theoretical and generalizable sense. Thus, research is theoretically grounded whereas evaluation is based on specific problems or contexts.

Third, evaluators are not interested in generalizing results to other situations, although sometimes that possibility is relevant. Research, by using theory and scientific techniques, should be generalizable to other situations. Evaluation uses specific information for making decisions about a particular situation. Similarly, in evaluation the questions or criteria emerge from the decision makers who will use the information and not necessarily from the personal interest of the evaluator. In research, the hypotheses may come from the researcher's interests and goals or from previous research.

Fourth, evaluation projects should be undertaken when a decision needs to be made or the relative worth of something is unknown. Research is conducted to develop new knowledge. In other words, research leads to theoretical conclusions whereas evaluation leads to decisions for solving problems. As was discussed in the previous chapter, evaluation must lead to judgment about the worth of something; the value of evaluation lies in making valid judgments that result in enlightened decision-making.

Fifth, the results of research are usually published because their purpose is to add to the body of knowledge about a particular topic or theory. Journal articles and presentations are the way this purpose is accomplished. Although evaluation reports are generally written and presented formally to decision makers, the information is not necessarily shared publically or broadly. We find some exceptions regarding applied research in some of the major journals of the leisure services field such as the *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, Tourism Management, Sport Management Review*, and the *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*. Editors of these journals sometimes publish evaluation studies that serve as models for research methods or provide insights for other professionals to use in their organizations.

Sharing of Common Methods

In the broadest sense, research includes elements of evaluation, and evaluation requires the use of research techniques. We frequently see separate chapters in research texts (e.g., Babbie, 2012) that focus on evaluation research. Research and evaluation projects, nevertheless, share common methods. If you have a good grasp of the repertoire of methods as well as data collection and analysis techniques available for evaluation, you will have a sound methodological foundation for conducting research. The use of methods may be applied differently, however. Research relies on theory as its building blocks and evaluation relies on application and decision-making. Figure 1.2 shows how evaluation and research share common methods such as surveys, observations, and experiments but have different applications.
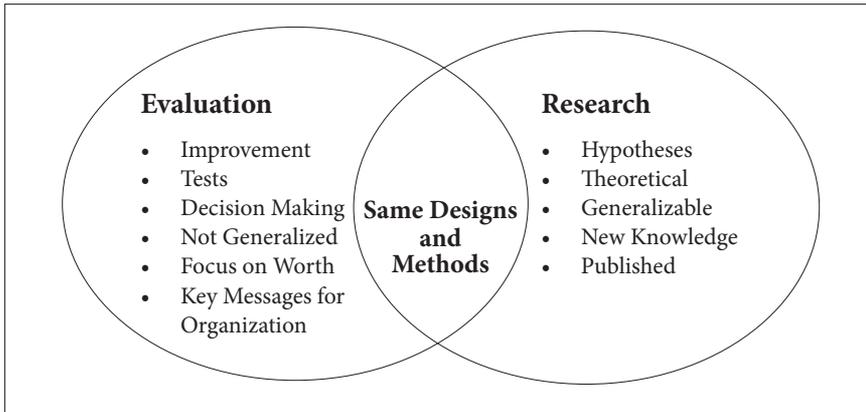
Figure 1.2. A Comparison of Evaluation and Research

A Comparison of Evaluation and Research

In some cases, either an evaluation or research project could be undertaken depending on how the data are used. For example, suppose you wanted to know how adolescent girls experienced a recreation activity such as playing basketball. In an evaluation project you might develop criteria to determine how self-esteem changed as a result of participating in an activity. You could measure these changes using a pretest and posttest to see what the girls experienced before they started the activity and then again after the activity. From a research perspective, you might do the same thing, but you would be interested in examining a theory such as learned helplessness as a way for understanding how self-esteem changes.

The difference between evaluation and research in this example also relates to how you explain what the changes or lack of changes mean. In the judgment phase, the evaluator would be concerned with ways to make sure that these positive changes continue to happen through the recreation program. The researcher would be interested in tying the findings to theory and building the body of knowledge about girls and a theory such as learned helplessness in general. This process that may or may not be directly applied to improving a particular recreation program.

Doing evaluation and research at the same time is possible, but the criteria phase will need to include research questions linked to theory and the judgment phase will need to include a discussion of how the body of knowledge based on a literature review can be enhanced with this research information. Evaluation is generally, but not always, easier to do than research because it relates to addressing specific criteria for making decisions about programs, places, participants, policies, or personnel. Most people who develop evaluation skills can also develop research skills. Keep in mind that the reasons and applications are the major differences between evaluation and research.

Evaluation should not be sloppy research! The same protocols and rules of methodology that apply to research apply to evaluation. Good evaluations rely on sound research methods. The process for evaluation and research is similar, but the major differences lie in the purpose of the research and how the evaluation or research results are used. The use of theory and literature reviews is more often associated with research than with evaluation projects.

A Word About Theory

One of the major differences between research and evaluation lies in the use of theory as an aspect of criteria and judgment. Many excellent books have been written about research, theory, and leisure studies that you may wish to consult. This chapter simply introduces some of the aspects of theory to consider. However, an important point about theory and evaluation needs to be recognized before we proceed. While theory is primarily connected to research efforts, it doesn't mean that evaluation is atheoretical. In many cases, an evaluation project may recognize a theory (for example, a theory of change) as an important foundation for the evaluation. One example is the way many organizations use theory of change to better understand the processes that lead to desired outcomes in their specific context.

Two of the primary aims of research are either to relate data to a theory or to generate a theory from data. Theory gives order and insight through explanations to what can be, is, or has been observed (Henderson, Presley, & Bialeschki, 2004). In other words, theory provides a "road map." Research is sometimes criticized in leisure stud-

ies because it lacks theory or has poor theoretical quality. Although not all research that lacks theory may be classified as evaluative, it is generally more like evaluation than research if theory is lacking.

The use of theory in research projects ranges from theory testing and confirmation to theory development. In theory testing, a known theory is stated prior to beginning a research study. The study is then conducted to see whether or not that theory helps to explain "what is" related to the topic. In theory development, a theory is generated after the research to aid in explaining what happened. This theory emerges from the data and is frequently tied to other similar or related theories. Closely associated with theory is the use of models for illustrating theory in leisure research literature.

Theories are generally associated with hypotheses in research projects. Hypotheses reflect the researcher's "guess" about what the outcomes of a research study might be. Hypotheses are like criteria in evaluation projects, and they are useful because they set out goals regarding the research outcomes. These hypotheses may be stated as relationships between variables or as research questions. For example, one hypothesis stated as a relationship might be "organized camping programs will enhance the prosocial behavior of youth." Stated as a question, the hypothesis might be, "Do organized camping programs enhance the prosocial behavior of youth?" These hypotheses should be based on theory or evidence, should be testable, and should be brief but clear.

Theory often is tested and confirmed in research projects. Theory, however, might also be grounded or developed in a research project, particularly when qualitative data are collected and the researcher does not have a preconceived idea of what he or she might find. This theory, sometimes referred to as emerging or substantive theory, can then become the basis for other studies that might test it in other ways.

A number of theories are used in recreation and leisure research. Some of these theories are borrowed from other fields, such as business and psychology. For example, researchers have used marginality theory to explain the lack of participation of people of color in recreation programs. Social exchange theory has been used to analyze the reasons why people choose or do not choose to become involved in advisory boards. Carrying capacity has been used to determine how

much use an outdoor area can take before the resources and recreational experiences of participants are diminished.

Researchers have also developed conceptual frameworks and theory specifically related to leisure sciences. For example, travel cost models are used to examine why and how people make vacation choices. Conceptual constraint models have provided a plethora of information about why people do not participate in recreation activities to the full extent they would like. Journals such as *Leisure Sciences, Journal of Leisure Research, Annals of Tourism,* and *Journal of Sport Management* contain numerous examples of how theory and conceptual frameworks have been applied in the field of recreation and leisure research.

Using Literature Reviews

A literature review involves finding other studies related to the proposed research study to use in planning a research project. "Reviewing the literature" includes finding sources of information in books, journals, or reports, and reading and evaluating them to see how they fit with the proposed research questions. An individual undertaking an evaluation project might also use literature to assist in conducting a project, but not necessarily. Since evaluation projects are usually not published within the scientific community, they are often not as easily accessible as research projects.

The review of literature undertaken for a research project is usually extensive, thorough, and aimed at trying to uncover as much as possible about previous studies regarding the research topic. This review is important because it provides a way to find out what others have done so the researcher can contribute to the existing body of knowledge by building on this previous work. The literature review provides the foundation for the interpretation of research if the researcher has gained insight into the meaningful results obtained by others. Doing a literature review helps to delimit the research problem, provides insight into possible methods, and uncovers the most current thinking about theories or conceptual frameworks.

With myriad resources available in libraries and on the Internet, finding sources for the literature review should not be difficult. The

difficulty lies in sifting through the literature to critically examine what can be learned to strengthen a proposed research study. The researcher must also have a means for organizing the information so the best ideas can be put together to create the foundation for the pending research project. This literature review will also provide a touchstone when the data are collected and analyzed to show how the research project contributes to what information already exists. Doing the literature review is a central task for any research project. A literature review may be helpful for an evaluation project but is not mandatory, as it is for a research study.

Some of you reading this book may be more interested in research and theoretical applications than in evaluation. If you read this book and study Units Two and Three, as well as portions of Unit Four, you will have a solid background in research methods. If you want to do research, however, we suggest you do additional reading from texts designed specifically to address research issues and from journals that report the most recent research in the field. Doing evaluation projects does not mean that you shouldn't also know this research literature, but evaluation projects require a different starting point and a different application in the end.

From Ideas to Reality

Evaluation and research are closely linked because they share common methods. As indicated previously, we find it most useful to think of research and evaluation as two separate approaches to finding answers. Regardless of whether you are conducting research that uses theory and a literature review or constructing an evaluation project, methods such as surveys, observations, unobtrusive measures, or experiments are possible. Similarly, both researchers and evaluators will need to be concerned about sampling, measurement, and analysis. The major differences between evaluation and research are in the purpose and in the interpretation of the results.

Now that you have studied this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Describe the differences between research and evaluation
- Explain when a research study would be desirable and when an evaluation project would be more appropriate
- Identify the types of research that you might see in recreation journals
- Describe the importance of theory and literature reviews

1.3 The Trilogy of Evaluation and Research: Criteria, Evidence, and Judgment

The premise of this book is that three components must be present for evaluation to aid in decision-making: criteria, evidence (data), and judgment. Expressed in a slightly different way related to research but with the same elements might be the components of research questions, evidence (data), and interpretation. If any part of this trilogy is missing, successful evaluation or research will not occur. In other words, we might say:

Criteria + Evidence + Judgment = Evaluation
and
Research Questions + Evidence + Interpretation = Research

The purpose of this chapter is to define this trilogy. It would be wonderful if we could offer a magic formula that showed how to use the evaluation and research trilogy for any given project, but that is not possible. Every project in every organization and setting is different. An infinite number of combinations exists for linking criteria, evidence, and judgment. Regardless of the project, the importance of the trilogy for systematic evaluation and rigorous research lies in our ability to link and logically use the three elements.

Criteria

Criteria refer to the standards or the ideals upon which something is evaluated or studied. Criteria form the basic organizing framework for evaluations, similar to how hypotheses or research questions are used in research. Further, criteria will determine to a great extent what method would be best to use. To determine criteria is to determine the purpose of an evaluation, the models that might be applied, the levels of evaluation needed, and the specific evaluation questions that will be explored. In many ways, criteria are directly tied to plan-

ning because to develop criteria is to set a framework or a road map to follow from the beginning to the end of a project.

All of us always have criteria in our heads, but they may not be appropriate in all situations. For example, when people disagree over how good a restaurant might be, we must be careful that the same criteria are being applied. If someone dislikes a restaurant because the servers are slow and rude, a different criterion is being applied than if the criterion is the price of the food or how it tasted. Of course when we eat at a restaurant, we expect all criteria to be met or exceeded, but depending on the definition of criteria, our judgments might vary depending on what criteria we use, and what criteria are the most important. Some criteria may be more important than others. For example, if the food at a restaurant is extraordinary, you might be willing to overlook slow service.

Developing criteria often appears to be the easiest aspect of the inquiry process, but in reality it may be the most difficult. Depending upon the purpose of the evaluation or research project, the criteria or research questions may be self-evident. For example, if a program has a set of well-written goals and objectives to serve as the criteria, the evaluator can then decide how best to gather evidence. If, however, you are not sure what needs to be evaluated, determining criteria may be more difficult. You can't evaluate or research everything, so you will have to choose what can be examined based on the time and resources you have as well as who wants the information. For any project, measuring everything with any degree of depth is unlikely. Criteria must be intentionally chosen.

One of the major pitfalls of evaluation is not stating the criteria specifically enough so that they can be measured. The evaluator must be able to articulate what to measure. A great difference exists between determining how many people participated in a program and identifying their satisfaction with the program. Sometimes data are collected without a specific set of criteria in mind. If you are lucky, the data may answer the critical evaluation questions, but chances are they will not unless a plan was made. Sometimes we collect data believing we are addressing one set of criteria only to find out this assumption was not the case. Sometimes the evaluator has one set of criteria that she or he thinks should be measured, while stakeholders (e.g., boards of directors or parents) may have something else in mind. Thus, clearly identifying what questions you wish to address or

what criteria to evaluate before data are collected for an evaluation or research project is essential.

Many people struggle with how to design evaluation systems, as well as specific projects, because they do not have a sense of the criteria that need to be evaluated. To skip over the step of identifying criteria, or to skip over this unit, will not be useful in the long run if good decision-making and/or contributions to the body of knowledge are to occur. The more time spent determining what you want to evaluate, the more time will be saved later when you are collecting reliable and valid information and making decisions about what the data mean.

Evidence

Evidence means data. Data are pieces of information that are collected and analyzed to determine whether criteria are met. In gathering evidence, the timing, type of data, sample size and composition, and techniques for handling data must be determined; these aspects of evidence will be discussed in greater detail later in this book.

The two major types of data are qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative data in the simplest form refer to numbers from measurements that result in some type of statistics. Qualitative data refer to words or images used to describe or explain what is happening. Many evaluation designs and research methods can be used to collect these two types of data ranging from experimental and descriptive designs to the more specific methods related to surveys, observations, and unobtrusive measures. All of these methods will be discussed in detail in Unit Two.

Evidence must relate directly to the established criteria or research questions. If poor criteria were set up, designing instruments that will measure what you really want to measure will be difficult. Applying data collection, analysis techniques, and research methods are not difficult processes, in themselves. Applying them appropriately based on criteria is what requires effort.

Judgment

Judgment is the interpretation of the value of something based on evidence collected from predetermined criteria. Judgments refer specifically to the conclusions and recommendations made for any project. Judgment is one aspect of evaluation that frequently gets left out. You can have excellent criteria and evidence laid out for an evaluation project. However, the final step of the evaluation process is lacking if judgments, in the form of conclusions and recommendations, are not made about what the data mean.

Judgment is not a matter of learning a process that can be applied each time. Each set of criteria and method of gathering evidence will result in a number of possible conclusions and recommendations. Conclusions, however, must relate back to the hypotheses, objectives, research questions, or criteria of the project, as well as to the data. Recommendations are proposed courses of action to be followed based on the conclusions. These conclusions and recommendations generally are articulated in the form of reports, presentations, or journal articles before a project is complete.

Putting It All Together

Useful and rigorous projects use the trilogy as the framework for the entire process. Table 1.3 provides a summary of how the trilogy relates to the process of evaluation and research. The use of the trilogy of evaluation is a simple way to be sure that evaluation is being conceptualized appropriately. We find it a useful and straightforward way of thinking about and moving through the evaluation and research processes.

From Ideas to Reality

Several brief examples may help to illustrate how the evaluation process works. If we wanted to examine the outcomes participants gain from a particular kind of activity, we might decide to use satisfaction as the criterion. We would then find an instrument or develop one to measure satisfaction with an activity. We would select

Table 1.3

Summary of How the Evaluation/Research Trilogy Works

Criteria
- Determining a problem and a reason for doing evaluation or research
- Examining goals and objectives (if they exist)
- Developing broad evaluation or research questions (such as what are the motivations for involvement in an activity or what job related expectations should be used to evaluate a staff member)

Evidence
- Method selection including instrument design
- Sample selection
- Actual data collection
- Data management
- Data analysis (coding and interpretation)

Judgment
- Presentation of findings
- Development of conclusions and interpretations from data
- Development of recommendations (for improvement, application, or further research)

an audience or a sample and collect evidence (data) by using that instrument. We would then analyze the data using descriptive statistics to develop conclusions and make recommendations about how satisfied people were with participation in a recreation activity and what might be done to improve satisfaction.

Perhaps we were interested in determining if the riding area of a horseback program for children with disabilities was safe. We would have to determine the criteria that describe a safe riding area. Standards developed by other groups might provide the criteria to examine. Using those criteria and developing a checklist, we would observe the area where children with disabilities are riding. Based on the results, we would then draw conclusions and make recommendations for how to improve an area so it will be safer for the participants.

We might be interested in whether the administrative policy we have for refunds is appropriate. The criteria will be to determine how often the policy has been used and what the situations are surrounding its use. The data would be collected from existing records that we would examine and tabulate. On the basis of those records, we would make judgments concerning how much and how often the policy was used, and we could offer possible recommendations for how it might be improved in the future.

Now that you have studied this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Describe the value of using criteria, evidence, and judgment together in an evaluation or research project
- Design a project showing how the trilogy of evaluation or research would be linked

1.4 Why Evaluate:
You Don't Count if You Don't Count

The title of this chapter is a play on words, obviously. Further, not all evaluation or research requires numbers or counting, as you will see later in this book. However, evaluation and research are important. The goal of evaluation is to determine the value or worth of something so that good decisions can be made. The goal of research is to get information that will contribute to the body of knowledge about a field and lead to an enhanced quality of life. Evaluation enables us to gain information or feedback by developing criteria to be used to gather data (e.g., count) to make proactive, enlightened decisions. "Why evaluate" is the focus of this chapter.

Many reasons exist for doing evaluations and research. Each evaluation or research project conducted will likely have different purposes associated with it. Regardless of the purpose, formal systematic inquiry and data collection must be done using criteria, reliable and valid evidence or data, and an open perspective for understanding phenomena and examining how programs, facilities, staff, and administrative procedures in recreation services can be improved.

Some professionals are afraid of evaluation because they fear what they might find. If everything appears to be going all right, evaluation seems like more work on an already overburdened schedule just to find out what you think you already know. The adage "Don't fix it if it ain't broke" comes to mind. But evaluation is not meant only for crisis situations when changes have to be made. When evaluation is done systematically, crisis situations can often be avoided.

Changing attitudes toward accountability and the expectation of solid information offers many opportunities for evaluation. Some societal trends are making evaluation and research critical for the success of organizations. Many organizations are seeking ways to show that what they do really makes a difference. Further, new emphases are being placed on determining what constitutes quality as well as outcomes in evaluation. For example, one of the required standards from the Council on Park and Recreation Accreditation (CAPRA; the

group that accredits community park and recreation departments) is that there shall be a systematic evaluation plan to assess outcomes and the operational deficiency and effectiveness of the agency.

New Concepts in the 21st Century

Best Practices

New concepts are also associated with evaluation in the 21st century. One notion is *best practices.* A best practice is an aspect of an agency, process, or system that is considered effective. These practices are always evolving, but some determination, presumably through evaluation, has to be made that these practices are indeed superior in some way. Sometimes the idea of best practices is criticized for allegedly promoting practices that work well in one organization, without having done a systematic assessment of how the practices might work in other organizations. Evaluation can counter that type of criticism.

Benchmarking

Another emerging term is *benchmarking*. It is often considered a way to identify best or promising practices because it is a standard of operation that enables an organization to compare itself to others' performance or to some standard or average. Benchmarking is used to determine what the best standard is and who sets the standard. In basketball, for example, you could argue that many consecutive NBA Championships made the Chicago Bulls the benchmark. We can do the same thing in recreation services. Who operates the most efficient organization? Who has the most inclusive program? Who gets the greatest return on investment? Once a professional decides what to benchmark, and how to measure it, the object is to figure out how the "best" got to be there and how others might also reach that standard. Evaluation is central to benchmarking.

Evidenced-Based Practice

Yet another emerging concept related to evaluation and research is referred to as *evidence-based practice*. It refers to a decision-making process that integrates the best available research, professional expertise, and participant characteristics. Evidence-based practice has been largely used in clinical settings, but it has begun to move

into great potential in various community settings as well. It is an approach to assuring that the programs conducted in recreation have the potential to make a difference in people's lives.

Evidence-based practice helps to determine what works best regarding issues such as how organizations can encourage people to be more active or how youth programs should be conducted to obtain positive youth development. It moves beyond just intuition to gathering evidence about how and why those practices work and how they can be used in different settings. The focus is on assessing effectiveness after an effort, such as implementing a therapeutic recreation intervention or the conduct of a community recreation program.

Further, staff in many organizations need to justify how resources are being used to achieve realistic results from their programming and management efforts. Calls for good decision-making and accountability are coming from participants including clients and consumers, from the professionals' desire to improve services, an awareness of good management practices, a recognition of society's limited fiscal and human services, and legislative mandates such as requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Participatory Evaluation

Several other evaluation trends seem to be emerging. Many evaluators have encountered an interest in *participatory evaluation,* where participants have a larger role and voice in the evaluation process. For example, an out-of-school time teen program may involve some of the teens throughout the entire evaluation process—from helping to establish criteria, to collecting data, to interpreting the results, and ultimately with decision-making.

Data Visualization

Another trend is the use of *data visualization* to share evaluation findings. Interactive graphics, videos, and infographics, which are tools that creatively combine numbers, text, images, and color, are new ways to use information to better engage participants, clients, staff, and funders.

Evaluation for Learning and Accountability

Lastly, some funders seem equally interested in *evaluation for learning* as *evaluation for accountability.* This concept will be discussed in the following section, but is an interesting contrast to past

evaluation orientations where evaluation was often viewed as a process you had to do to show success with positive data and hide failures in order to keep the grant dollars.

Major Reasons for Evaluation

Since evaluation is so important for recreation services, the rest of this chapter focuses directly on reasons for evaluation. In the broadest sense, professionals evaluate for several reasons: because it's compulsory and they have to evaluate, for defense and/or offense to determine the worth or lack of worth of an aspect of the organization (e.g., program or a staff member or area/facility), or to improve or validate an aspect of the organization. More specifically, we believe the major purposes for evaluation can be described with eight broad, and not necessarily mutually exclusive, reasons:

1. To determine accountability
2. To assess or establish a baseline
3. To assess the attainment of goals and objectives
4. To ascertain outcomes and impact
5. To determine the keys to successes and failures
6. To improve programs
7. To set future directions
8. To comply with external standards

These reasons overlap one another a great deal. Evaluation usually does not occur for only one reason, but occurs for a combination of reasons that enable decision-making. Research, in contrast to evaluation, generally focuses more on theory confirmation or development that could also relate to any of these broad reasons.

Accountability

Accountability, as one dimension of decision-making, is often mentioned as a primary purpose of evaluation. We might think of accountability as being more reactive than proactive, although it can be used for proactive decisions. It assures people that the organization is behaving in a responsible manner. If an organization or program is not showing accountability, then a decision may be made about whether that organization or program should continue to operate.

Accountability is a relative term that describes the capability of a recreation organization to justify or explain the activities and services provided. In essence, accountability reflects the extent to which expenditures, activities, and processes effectively and efficiently accomplish the purposes for which an organization or a program was developed. Often projects are evaluated for accountability when some external unit, such as a city manager or hospital administrator, requests the evaluation. Accountability, however, should be an ongoing concern of staff in any organization, regardless of who is "watching," and especially if tax dollars are used to support the program.

Accountability helps determine legitimacy. It is also applied to see if a recreation program is meeting the needs and desires of people in the community. A byproduct of the evaluation is that the agency may be seen in a better light in the community, but the bottom line is that accountability should result in avoiding unnecessary expenditures of money.

Establishing a Baseline

Evaluation may be done to set a baseline or to benchmark. This reason for evaluation usually results in an assessment or a needs assessment (defined later in this Unit), depending upon the context evaluated. An assessment is the gathering of data or the measurement of phenomena that is then put into an understandable form to compare results with objectives. Assessing a baseline can also provide a starting point for measuring change and a plan for future action, by comparing an organization to a standard. Community needs assessments, as well as clinical assessments of people with disabilities, are frequently used to establish a baseline in recreation services.

Assessing Goals and Objectives

One common reason for doing evaluation is to assess whether goals and objectives have been met. As indicated earlier, goals and objectives have been the backbone of many evaluation efforts, although some approaches to evaluation don't take goals and objectives directly into account. Assessment of goals and objectives, for example, may help to determine how programs and areas/facilities are designed to reach those goals. A good deal has been written recently about "intentionality," the careful design of programs to reach specific goals. The logic model, which will be discussed later in this

book, is a tool used to determine goals and objectives, design programs intentionally to meet those goals, and then measure the outcomes and the processes that result in these outcomes.

An example of a research study that examined outcomes related to intentionality was an analysis of camper outcomes. One finding of the study was that camp directors who intentionally designed programs to meet a specific outcome at camp were much more likely to see gains in that outcome at the end of camp than those directors that did not have this goal (Henderson, Bialeschki, Thurber, Whitaker, & Scanlin, 2007).

Judgments from assessing goals and objectives result in determining if stated objectives are operating and/or whether other objectives are more appropriate. Thus, evaluation also can allow us to redefine the means for setting objectives and to determine exactly what goals our organizations ought to be setting and striving to accomplish.

Ascertaining Outcomes and Impacts

Determining the impact, effects, outcomes, and results of a program, area, facility, or administrative procedure is the bottom line of evaluation. By evaluating the outcomes of a staff member's efforts, the expenditure of money, or the changes that occur in participants as a result of a program, decisions can often be made about value and impact.

Impact evaluation asks what differences a program has made, how it has affected people, and how it will affect people in the future. Outcomes are defined as the benefits or changes that occur. Outcomes and impact are not always easy to measure, but they are the essences of program planning, in particular, within recreation service organizations. If what we do in any area of recreation services does not have a positive effect on people, then it may not be worth doing, whether the activity is done through therapeutic recreation, sports programming, or park planning. The use of the logic model described later has had great influence in addressing outcomes.

Explaining Keys to Success and Failure

Some evaluations are undertaken to document processes that are used to obtain certain objectives. In other words, evaluation is undertaken to see what works and what doesn't. This idea is akin to

evidence-based practice. In addition, determining what contributes to a successful program, as well as what might create problems or failures, is useful.

An important element in program evaluation is a newly applied term called *fidelity*. In other words, how can a program be consistently implemented so that successful outcomes occur regularly over time? Fidelity refers to "exactness" as well as the idea of "faithfully" doing what you say you will do. The value of fidelity in evaluation and research is to assure that best practices can be analyzed and the keys to success or failure can occur over and over if the program is faithfully executed.

Success can be determined in many other ways. For example, weighing benefits against costs is one way to describe success. Other aspects of whether a program has worth relate to determining inputs such as staff effort, expertise, or leadership that might affect a program. This reason for evaluation allows professionals to increase the utility and probability for successful programs that they conduct in the future and also allows individuals to share procedures, processes, and best practices that might be useful with other professionals in similar situations.

Organization Improvement

Organizational improvement related to quality control is a key practical reason for evaluation. Professionals evaluate staff, programs, policies, and participants to make revisions in their existing programs. In the starkest way, one might decide whether to keep programs or staff members or whether to let them go—a "go/no go" proposition. Sometimes the evaluation of staff, for example, results in professional growth and education opportunities by appraising personnel quality and qualifications. The organization can also be improved by gauging public sentiment, attitudes, and awareness that provide information to enable professionals to improve and/or maintain high quality in the organization. Further, evaluation for improvement provides a means for two-way communication with participants, staff, and the public.

Improvement might be sought by appraising existing facilities and physical property as to adequacy, accessibility, safety features, attractiveness, appropriateness, availability, and utilization. The evaluator tries to seek out and eliminate any detrimental features that

could create risk or prevent the best recreation experience. Evaluation for improvement might also result in replacing outmoded concepts and invalid ideas about how a recreation program ought to be run. Summative evaluations can lay a basis for new projects and can point a professional towards how to program more effectively in the future. When we know what worked and didn't work and how people liked a particular program, it is easier to set objectives, improve programs, and implement plans for the future.

Set Future Directions

Setting future directions is implicit in all of these reasons for evaluating. Ultimately all evaluation should result in changes for the future. In some cases, the rationale for putting money or additional resources into future programs needs to be considered. Evaluation can provide information for making decisions that will affect the future of any organization.

Complying with External Standards

Some organizations are required to do evaluations to comply with external standards set by the government or by some other funding agency or professional body. These evaluations often are done for other purposes that directly aid the organization, but this evaluation may be done simply to meet accreditation or licensing requirements. The current procedures done by organizations such as the American Camp Association (ACA) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) use a standard evaluation whereby a camp or a recreation organization can become accredited by showing that they have complied with certain standards. The accreditation process of these organizations is meant to be a guideline for helping organizations evaluate themselves by using the external standards as a beginning point. "Experts" then assure that the organization's evaluation is accurate.

If you are interested in a career in public parks and recreation, you may want to be aware of the CAPRA standards for agencies, including a specific set related to evaluation. These standards include a mandate for systematic evaluation within the agency. In addition, the standards recommend that there "should be" involvement in research in the organization as well as personnel on staff or a consultant with expertise in directing the evaluation/research process. The

standards also recommend in-service education for professional employees about conducting quality evaluations.

Other Reasons to Evaluate

As you can see, reasons for evaluation are numerous and overlapping. Seldom would a professional only have one specific reason for evaluating. In fact, a problem may exist when the evaluator is so single-minded that he or she does not see all the possibilities for learning that can result from doing an evaluation project. For example, the initial purpose of an evaluation might be to assess goals and objectives, but the process can also highlight keys to success and expose areas that can be improved.

Some other reasons for evaluating might not be as positive as the previous examples and might be detrimental to an organization if they are the sole reason for evaluating. Examples of these "not so good" reasons to evaluate include: to postpone decisions or avoid responsibility, to justify programs and/or to eliminate staff, to further public relations only, or to only meet funding requirements.

Postponing Decisions or Avoiding Responsibility

Sometimes professionals use evaluations to postpone decisions or to avoid responsibility. Sometimes evaluation will "buy" time until something else can be figured out that has no relationship to the evaluation. If a supervisor or a manager has a tough decision to make, for example, she or he might decide to evaluate in hopes that some magic solution will occur. Sometimes this answer emerges, but usually it does not. Evaluation still requires that necessary third element of judgment. Ultimately the supervisor or manager will have to "bite the bullet" and take responsibility.

Program Justification or Staff Elimination

Similarly, evaluation done just for the purpose of program justification or to eliminate staff may not be appropriate. An evaluation may result in program justification, but a great deal of bias might be built into something that has program justification as its sole purpose. Further, an evaluation might give some ideas about what needs to be done to improve an organization, but using it solely for the purpose of getting rid of people is probably not going to be beneficial

to the morale of the organization or the way that employees view the value of evaluation in the long run.

Public Relations Impact

Evaluating solely for the public relations impact may not help to improve a program. It looks good to see an organization doing evaluations, but if nothing ever changes or the evaluations are not used, the public will not stay impressed for long. Related to this idea is conducting evaluations just to increase prestige either within departments, in an organization, or with one's peers. Evaluations will only increase prestige when they are appropriately used.

Funding Requirements

Evaluations done only because of grant or funding requirements are often not as effective as those in which the stakeholders or the participants really care about how the feedback can be used for decision-making. When funding sources require an evaluation, the evaluator ought to consider carefully what can be learned that may be helpful. In other words, staff should address not only the "letter of the law" but also the "spirit of the law." Evaluations can be helpful if we expect them to be helpful and not just another chore that has to be undertaken.

A required evaluation is a wonderful opportunity to explore other reasons for evaluation that can assist in decision-making. As previously mentioned, an "evaluations for learning" approach is becoming popular with some funders who actually want to see the grantee critically evaluate the learning involved with their successes and failures, encourage their willingness to take risks to try something new, discuss their findings openly with key stakeholders (e.g., staff, participants, board), and ultimately, improve their efforts over time.

Fear of Evaluation

Many professionals are afraid of evaluation, both for good and not so good reasons. In some cases, practitioners do not believe they have the skill sets needed to successfully implement an evaluation process. Some people associate evaluation with statistics, which is often scary and avoided to save face. If good goals and objectives have not been written, evaluations are frequently difficult to do. In

other cases, people do not know how to measure the information that they would like to know. Some professionals disregard evaluations because their prior experiences with formal evaluations didn't tell much more than they already knew.

Others have done evaluations but then have not made judgments and used the data so the evaluations were seen as simply a "waste of time." Still others are afraid of what they might find out if they evaluate—negative results are not always easy to take. Finally, some professionals fear evaluations because they can be very time consuming, and most professionals already feel too busy. In many situations, systematic evaluation data are not considered an integral piece to the success of the program, so is not critical to decision-making for improvement and rarely missed if left out completely. Each of these fears, however, can be countered by paying attention to planning evaluation projects based on carefully determined and appropriate reasons for undertaking them.

When NOT to Evaluate

Although evaluation is important and can be extremely useful, Theobald (1987) offered sage advice suggesting that a professional must also know enough about when *not* to evaluate. The first rule is to not evaluate unless you are sincere about making decisions to improve your program. Secondly, you may not want to evaluate immediately if you know your program has serious organizational problems. The wise plan would be to try to fix those problems and *then* evaluate rather than think that evaluation is going to provide you the magic answer. Evaluation can expose problems but is not necessarily the panacea for fixing them. Further, usually it is best not to evaluate when something is just getting started; give the program or staff member a chance to get started, or better yet, use a formative approach to make the data more useful.

Along with these concerns, do not evaluate if you do not have sound criteria that can be measured. You do not always need to have specific objectives, but you need to be clear and purposeful about what you think your program ought to be doing. Staff and other stakeholders should have a similar understanding of what the program should be doing. Evaluations should be avoided if there is not

an overall sense of buy in to the program's purpose and objectives. If you do not have any goals and objectives, then identifying criteria will be particularly important.

In addition, don't evaluate if you already know the outcome; it will be a waste of time, unless of course some stakeholder needs to see written documentation of the results. Finally, don't evaluate if you know the disadvantages will outweigh the advantages. If you know that an evaluation will be too time consuming or too costly for what you will get, then don't do it, or even better, use a different evaluation design that is appropriate for your situation.

Knowing How to Evaluate

Although excuses may be valid for not evaluating, we suspect the major reasons that evaluations are not systematically conducted are because professionals do not know how to set up an effective evaluation process, how to analyze the data, and/or how to interpret the data in useful ways to assist in making decisions.

The bottom line is that evaluations must be used for decision-making. If the data are not interpreted or if conclusions and recommendations are not used, the evaluation project or research is useless and a waste of time. Evaluation is not necessarily a panacea for solving the problems in an organization, but the process can provide important information. We will address more specific ways to implement and use evaluation results in an organization in later chapters, but you should consider the "whys" of evaluation before you begin to evaluate any aspect of a recreation system.

The best evaluation in the world cannot provide a definitive picture of the future, reduce the costs of goods and services, or decide the most desirable course of action. Those goals and decisions are still up to you as a professional. You make these decisions, however, based on the data you obtain from evaluations. Hopefully, as an evaluator, you make good decisions because you have the best possible data collected for the most appropriate reasons. Similarly, you undertake research as a way to add to the body of knowledge to better understand human behavior and how the world works. If you don't count (i.e., evaluate in some way), you just may not count!

From Ideas to Reality

Suppose someone on your park and recreation advisory board suggests that she or he is not sure that the summer playground program is really meeting the needs of children in your community. You believe that a systematic examination of that program may be useful to determine if the program is meeting children's needs. A number of reasons might be examined for doing this systematic evaluation: to determine if funds are being appropriately spent (accountability), to see if the goals and objectives for the program are being met, to determine if the inputs as far as staff and leadership are adequate to meet the program goals, to improve the program so that it better meets the needs of children, and to determine exactly what outcomes are happening to children because of the program. All of these reasons will result in determining future action surrounding the program.

As you can see in this example, the reasons for undertaking an evaluation are multiple. These reasons are important to consider. Further, it is important to make sure that staff, board members, and participants are in agreement concerning why an evaluation should be undertaken and how the results will be used.

Now that you have studied this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- List the reasons why an evaluation might be undertaken given a particular situation
- Describe the concerns and fears that some people have regarding undertaking evaluations
- Determine when it is best to undertake an evaluation project and when evaluation may not be to the advantage of an organization

1.5 Approaches to Evaluation: Models and More

Thinking about doing evaluation and research can be overwhelming. Approaches or models for evaluation provide a framework for conceptualizing and planning evaluation projects. No one model is specific to recreation services. Professionals in the recreation field have borrowed heavily from education evaluation principles as well as from business management and operations.

The lack of specific models for recreation creates both challenges and opportunities. Having so many choices based on the models designed in other fields can be challenging. On the other hand, these examples offer opportunities to choose the best model for the specific criteria that we want to measure for any of the areas (described as the five Ps) discussed later in this text.

In determining how recreation services might be evaluated, we discuss six approaches that may provide helpful frameworks. They include Intuitive Judgment, which is a pseudo-model, as well as five other more systematic approaches: Professional Judgment, Goal Attainment, Logic Model, the Goal-Free Model, and Systems or Process Approaches.

No one model of evaluation will work everywhere and every time. Further, for an evaluation project, these models may overlap and more than one model might work. The evaluator, therefore, must choose the best model for the situation. We simply cannot apply a standardized model across organizations or even across all the areas that might be evaluated. The value and applicability of any of these models lie in diversity and adaptability, not in uniformity and rigidity (Patton, 1978). All of these approaches have some relation to one another and offer a framework for organizing evaluation systems and planning projects.

A Pseudo-Model: Intuitive Judgment

A traditional component of evaluation is gut-level judgment. After you have conducted some type of program or even after you have

taken an exam, you have a good sense of whether or not it went well. With the development of the scientific method applied to evaluation, more systematic models have evolved beyond these intuitive feelings. However, do not ever doubt the importance of intuition in developing more formal models.

The pseudo-model, Intuitive Judgment, has importance but does not supplant a systematic approach. This form of evaluation relates to day-to-day observations that provide information for decision-making. For example, if in a casual conversation a staff member sensed that potential participants had not heard about a special event to be held even though a promotional plan had been implemented, something probably should be done immediately. Even without a systematic evaluation such as sending out a survey, changes could be made right away to better promote the event. Personal and collective reflection within an organization are important. Sometimes this intuitive evaluation is most useful when it is written down, so that during the next program or intervention, you remember the observations made.

Intuitive Judgment is useful, but reliable and valid evaluations that use systematic approaches to determine criteria, collect evidence, and make enlightened decisions are also necessary. We acknowledge the value of gut-level evaluations but they should not be the *only* means of evaluation if recreation services are to be accountable and based on a commitment to improvement.

Professional Expert Judgment

Evaluation by Professional Judgment or expert opinion is commonly used in the recreation sector. The approach often relates to two common strategies: (a) bringing in an external evaluator or a consultant or (b) using a set of external standards. Even if an external consultant is hired, she or he will likely use other models to obtain information in addition to her or his expert judgment.

Howe (1980) talked about evaluation by Professional Judgment as being like an art criticism model, where someone other than the artist critiques the artwork. Using the Professional Judgment of an external person may be a good idea when a high degree of objectivity is required, money is available, and an expert is available. Many

community recreation and park departments hire consultants to assist in long-range or master planning. The pros and cons of using a consultant or an external evaluator are discussed in more depth in the chapter on competencies.

Another common way that Professional Judgment is used is in evaluation by standards, generally through some type of accreditation process. Essentially, evaluation by standards involves a critical review by an individual or individuals who are experts because they have had training in judging established predetermined minimum criteria.

A standard is a statement of a best practice, desirable practice, or a level of performance for a given situation. Standards are an indirect measurement of effectiveness. People evaluating by using standards assume that if the stated desirable practices are followed, the program will be effective. Most standards are minimal goals and should be used as a guide, not necessarily a quality rating.

Standards change and must be reviewed regularly and revised as conditions change. Standards should reflect the needs of the patients, clients, participants, or campers in the specific area being served, must be reasonably attainable, and must be acceptable and usable to the professional who will apply them. Standards should be based on sound principles and the best information available about practice. They should stand the test of time, although they also should be revised to reflect changing societal conditions.

Accreditation is common in recreation services. For example, the American Camp Association has the Accreditation Process Guide (2012), which has existed and been updated in numerous ways for almost 70 years. Table 1.5(1) shows an example of one of the standards from the camp accreditation process.

The National Recreation and Park Association has been involved with accrediting recreation and leisure curricula in universities for almost 40 years and municipal park and recreation agencies for over 20 years. University accreditation is administered through the Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT). It recognizes academic programs in colleges and universities that prepare new professionals to enter the parks, recreation, tourism, and related professions Recreation agencies are accredited through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), which recognizes agencies for excel-

lence in operation and service. Quality assurance standards within therapeutic recreation have been related to the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO).

Table 1.5(1)

Sample of Standards (adapted from American Camp Association Accreditation Process Guide, 2012, p. 146–147)

PD-29 PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR (MANDATORY ALL)

Does the camp require that helmets be worn by all participants (staff and campers) when engaged in:

    PD-29.1:   Activities involving bicycling?
    PD-29.2:   Activities involving any kind of motorized vehicle?
    PD 29.3:   For all participants of adventure/challenge activities that involve rock climbing, rappelling, spelunking, high ropes, or vertical climbing walls/towers?
    PD 29.4:   Activities involving boarding, in-line skating, and hockey?

Contextual Education: It is important that helmets be appropriately sized and designed specifically for the activity being conducted, as helmet construction standards vary with different activities. This standard requires use of helmets approved by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM-approved). A helmet should fit the user comfortably, not obscure the user's visions, and it should be secured with a chin strap. Helmets may be supplied by the camp or by a staffed public facility, vendor, or personal property of the camper or staff.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION:
Visitor observation: Use of helmets on all activities
Visitor interviews: Camper description of helmets required.

    The process used for accreditation or evaluation by standards is generally to have an organization (e.g., hospital, public recreation department, or a camp) do a self-evaluation, make changes and improvements to comply with the minimum expectations or guidelines

established by the accrediting body, and have trained outside experts, who are usually volunteers, confirm that particular situations exist that meet the standards.

The standards used for accreditation traditionally have been criterion-referenced. That is, evaluations are based on some standard level of performance. They also may assess whether standard objectives have been met. In criterion-referenced evaluation, the subject evaluated is not compared to any other organization but simply is held up to a predefined standard for measurement. In the case of the above examples, the standards usually exist in a checklist, to which the evaluator responds "yes/no" or "fully met/partially met/not met." In some situations, such as the COAPRT accreditation of universities, the evaluator includes comments to explain the responses to the checklist.

Norm-referenced standards might also be applied in some situations for evaluation. These measures tell the relative position of a person or thing in reference to another person or thing using the same measuring tool. Persons compared to a norm of performance such as physical fitness tests would show the relationship of an individual to others in her or his age group. For example, if an individual was in the top quartile, she or he would be among the top 25% of those who took a particular test. The meaning of the score lies in the comparison to others. Professional Judgment is used in these measures to determine the meaning of the rank of one person in relation to others.

Some major changes, however, are occurring in professional standards in a number of fields, as professionals try to understand how to better assess the quality of various recreation services and how that quality impacts a group of people or a community. The American Camp Association is exploring ways to add "quality" analyses to the accreditation standards. High scores on standards do not necessarily reflect high quality or effectiveness.

Several other precautions should be noted with the current standards in most organizations. A great deal can be learned from Professional Judgment about the administrative procedures, areas and facilities, and programs, but the model is less useful for human dimensions such as personnel performance or participant outcomes or impacts. Another criticism of the Professional Judgment model related to standards is that the standards often are viewed as the maxi-

mum rather than the minimum guidelines. Lastly, professionals must be careful that the use of standards does not result in homogenized programs that are the same everywhere regardless of the context and resources of an organization.

Goal-Attainment Model

The Goal-Attainment Model, also known as evaluation or management by objectives, is probably the backbone of educational evaluation applied to recreation programs. Goal-Attainment is a preordinate model because pre-established goals and objectives are used to measure outcomes. The model works best when goals are discrete and/or objectives are measurable. A focus on specific objectives is easiest and best when using the model. This focus is especially true with the current focus on intentional or purposeful program designs.

A goal is a clear general statement about where the organization and its programs are doing related to the purpose or mission. Goals may be expressed in broad general terms or may be readily quantifiable and measurable in objective terms, which are usually then called objectives. Objectives may be defined as written or expressed intentions about intended outcomes. Goal-Attainment evaluation is based on measuring the congruence between performance and objectives. For this model to work, you must have well-written objectives and good criteria.

Writing objectives may not always be the most fun activity, but it is necessary if the Goal-Attainment Model is to be applied. Goal-Attainment can be used in any area of recreation and applied to any system. It may also be used in assessment, formative, or summative evaluations. Therapeutic recreation specialists, for example, have used the model frequently and effectively in setting goals and objectives during the assessment phase of treatment.

To emphasize again, the prerequisite and bottom line for using the Goal-Attainment Model of evaluation is to have appropriate and measurable goals and objectives. This process requires setting goals at the outset preferably before a program is begun (program evaluation), before an employee begins work (personnel evaluation), or before an administrative procedure or policy is implemented (organizational evaluation). Objectives are specific operational statements related to the desired goals and accomplishments of the organiza-

tion, staff, participants or program. Many objectives may exist for an organization depending on who is setting them. Objectives may be written for participants as well as for staff and for the organization (i.e., management objectives). Objectives are the criteria, and determining the appropriate measurement of objectives is critical.

For purposes of this discussion on the Goal-Attainment Model, we will refer to two types of objectives: process and outcome. Process objectives are associated with how an organization operates. For example, a process or organizational objective might be to recruit, train, and supervise 10 volunteers to assist with the youth athletic program. Another objective might be for a staff member to obtain a "good" or better rating on 75% of the evaluations completed by a tennis class. A process objective for a staff member also might be that she or he would oversee the publishing of a program brochure three times each year.

Outcomes are a description of the performance you want participants or staff to be able to exhibit when they have achieved the stated objectives. Often outcomes and behaviors are described synonymously, although outcomes are broader than just behavior. Outcomes usually refer to the (hopefully positive) impact on the participant as a result of your program. For example, an outcome objective might be that a participant would pass 80% of the skills in the swimming test. The resulting participant outcome would be that the participant becomes a stronger swimmer. Other outcome objectives might be that participants in a walking program will continue to walk four to five times a week after the program is completed, or that children in a camp nature program would be able to identify five animal tracks that they might find along a riverbank. The key is that the objectives provide a measuring stick for particular impacts (outcomes) from your program.

Although writing objectives has probably been covered elsewhere in your recreation degree program, a quick review of how to write these process objectives may be helpful. The components usually include describing a task, establishing who will do it, identifying the action that should be taken and the conditions, and stating the criteria for an acceptable minimal level of performance for the task. In writing these objectives, consider using strong verbs, stating only one purpose or aim per objective, specifying a single end-product or result, and specifying the expected time for achievement. Examples

of action verbs that might be used in writing objectives include "to enjoy," "to assume responsibility," "to engage in," "to describe," "to examine," "to identify characteristics," "to change," "to develop," "to define," "to prepare," "to compile," "to visualize," and "to understand."

Within outcome objectives, several domains have been identified:

1. Cognitive (thinking, knowledge)
2. Affective (feeling, attitudes)
3. Psychomotor (movement, acting)
4. Social (how people relate to each other)

When writing objectives for a participant or a program, you need to keep in mind the area where you want to see change in performance or behavior. As indicated previously, these objectives then become the criteria for evaluation. In measuring the outcomes of a program, objectives can provide the foundation for collecting data and making judgments about the success of a program.

In summary, the Goal-Attainment Model is a useful model for recreation professionals. It requires well-written and measurable goals and objectives. One of the cautions is to make sure that you don't get so focused on evaluating the goals that you ignore other evidence that suggests good things came out of an organization, a program, or a staff member's work. Measuring objectives does not mean you cannot measure unplanned objectives. The Goal-Attainment Model must be kept flexible enough to accommodate unplanned measurement. The information received may result in more appropriate goals and objectives written for evaluation next time. Further, the application of a Logic Model—a subtype of Goal-Attainment— requires having a thorough sense of the process and outcome purposes of any program, and such flexibility allows one to maintain that broad sense.

Logic Model

The Logic Model came into being during the 1970s and seems to be experiencing a resurgence of popularity, particularly with funders. The Logic Model is a form of Goal-Attainment, but we discuss it separately here. Yogi Berra's famous statement, "If you don't know

where you are going, you will end up somewhere else" is a good way to describe the value of a Logic Model. It helps a programmer determine where the program is going and provides a basis for evaluation. The Logic Model has emerged in recent years as a potential framework for considering how to think about program evaluation as well as a guide for assessing participant outcomes (Kellogg Foundation, 2001).

The premise of the Logic Model is that program components (i.e., staff, activities, equipment) contribute to program outcomes. The logic model itself is a picture of how an organization uses staff, activities, and resources to reach desired outcomes. By depicting a logical connection between program components and outcomes, the organization can better understand how to design programs to meet their goals. A program theory can be used to predict the effects of program changes on participant outcomes. (Baldwin, Caldwell, & Witt, 2005). Stated in another way, it provides a "road map" for planning and evaluation.

Figure 1.5(2) shows one example of a Logic Model. Many different types of logic models exist, and many use different terms to mean similar things. Most, like this example, start with a box for *inputs*. Inputs include the resources necessary for a specific program; in this case, inputs include such examples as budget, staff, marketing, and facilities. The next box, *activities*, describes the program itself. This example includes multiple activities such as skill development and social development. The next box is called *outputs*. The purpose of this box is to clearly identify who the program will serve and/or what specifically the program will produce. *Outcomes* are a bit different because they refer to the benefits participants will receive from participating in the program, described in short term, medium term, and overall impact or long term. Outcomes often focus on learning, skill development, or behavior change.

This example also includes space to describe assumptions, or the underlying beliefs important to the program, and external factors that might affect the program. A Logic Model can be read as a series of if/then statements that connect the different parts of a program. For example, if you have resources (inputs), then you can carry out activities. If you carry out these activities, you will serve your targeted population (outputs), and then you can create changes in these participants (outcomes).

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Our Impact
Budget $100,000 **Staff** 14 counselors 6 activity instructors 3 counselors- in training 2 administrators Staff training **Marketing** Website Social media Print **Facilities** Athletic field Swimming pool Gymnasium Multi-purpose room Area parks **Supplies** Office supplies Sports equipment Arts & crafts Digital cameras T-shirts First aid supplies **Partnerships** Bus company Local library Performers **Program Evaluation** Daily "Goal Check-Ins" with campers Weekly youth outcomes surveys (based on the weekly Character Theme) Weekly parent survey Monthly Program Quality Observations	**Skill development** Soccer Swimming Arts & crafts Photography Gardening Cooking Reading Drama **Personal development** Daily/weekly goal setting Weekly character themes Daily journaling **Social development** Big/little buddies Age-based "dens" Daily teambuilding activities	**In each 5-day session:** ~12 4-6 year olds ~20 7-9 year olds ~24 10-12 year olds **Total participation for the summer:** *Assuming about 30% of the kids will attend multiple sessions* ~85 4-6 year olds ~140 7-9 year olds ~170 10-12 year olds =395 youth **Revenue** **$125,000**	1. **Participants will achieve their goal for skill development by the end of the week.** 2. **Participants will earn a Character Award at least one time each session.** 3. **Participants will feel a sense of belonging in the camp community**.	1. **Participants will enroll in an activity course at the Community Center within 6 months of attending camp.** 2. **Participants will identify one specific way they will use their character skills during the school year.** 3. **Participants will contact at least one new camp friend within 6 months of attending camp.**	*Summer day campers will gain personal, social, and recreation skills in which they feel confident to apply at camp, at home, and in their school.*
Key stakeholders: Parents, camp staff, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, Parks & Recreation administrators, community members, funders			**External factors:** Economic downturn (people have less disposable income to spend on day camp), "Helicopter Parents," decreased funding from Parks & Recreation Department, extreme heat and other weather conditions, new day camp opening at neighboring agency		

Figure 1.5(2). Logic Model: Evergreen City Parks and Recreation Department Summer Day Camp

The Logic Model links directly to evaluation, even though it does not have a specific box labeled "evaluation." The model increases the potential for effectiveness by depicting linkages between program components and participant outcomes. The model allows an evaluator to ask questions about the program (e.g., what aspects of the program most shaped our ability to do the work? were the leaders

effective?). It also addresses questions related to quantity and quality (e.g., how many young people participated? how did people find out about the program?). The model also helps the evaluator ask questions related to the program's effectiveness, magnitude, and satisfaction (e.g., what is our assessment of what resulted from the day camp program? how satisfied were the campers? what have we learned about doing this type of program?). By providing a visual map for these questions, the evaluator can use the model to design evaluation strategies.

There is no single way to construct a Logic Model. It depends on the purpose. The linkages, not the specific labels (i.e., input versus resources or outputs versus participants) are what give power to the model. The lines and directional arrows (if used) convey action; they are necessary to show the linkages that are the logic behind the model. In other words, "if you do X, then Y should happen." The model can be as general or as specific as needed regarding its use and the level of the program.

Ideally, a Logic Model is developed during the time that a program is designed and can be modified and enhanced as a program evolves. However, a Logic Model can be created at any time that seems appropriate in helping to better understand a program or how it might be evaluated. If you find that in using a Logic Model, you determine that the outcomes and the activities do not connect, then you may need to change the activities to reach the outcomes. Remember, the purpose of the Logic Model is to show the relationships that exist to assure that program activities achieve the desired outcomes, and indicate ways to conduct evaluation.

Although the Logic Model is a useful depiction of how programs are planned and has implications for evaluation, it also has some limitations. First, the Logic Model represents what an organization intends to do—it does not necessarily reflect reality. That's why evaluation is needed. As in the case of the Goal-Attainment Model, the Logic Model reflects expected outcomes. However, in a field like recreation services, many unexpected outcomes may occur that we should not overlook in the evaluation process. The model also focuses on positive change, which is certainly what we seek in our recreation programs. However, change can be negative, so we must be aware of that possibility.

Some people suggest the Logic Model oversimplifies behavior, when in reality any change is complex and due to many factors that may influence outcomes. A Logic Model assumes that the "right" things are being done in terms of the purpose of a program. Further, Logic Models are not necessarily easy to develop and may appear to stymie the creativity and spontaneity of program development. Regardless of some of these limitations, the Logic Model is frequently used for program development and provides a roadmap for how evaluation might be focused and undertaken.

Goal-Free (Black Box) Model

A model of evaluation that has some possibilities in the field of recreation services is what is referred to as a Goal-Free or Black Box Model (Scriven, 1967). The model has been around for a long time, and its systematic value might be important to consider. The basis of the model is the examination of an organization, group of participants, or program irrespective of the goals. In other words, the intent of Goal-Free evaluation is to discover and judge actual effects, outcomes, or impacts without considering what the effects were supposed to be. The approach is the opposite of the Goal-Attainment or Logic Model. The evaluator or researcher begins with no preordained idea about what to find.

The purpose of Goal-Free evaluation is to find out what is really happening. The value lies in discovering descriptions or explanations that may have unintended side effects. You must realize that to be completely goal free is impossible. An evaluation always involves some type of question or comparison. Further, the evaluator must select only certain information out of the total information pool that she or he could collect. Data from the Black Box Model are usually qualitative (i.e., focused on words rather than numbers) and collected in relation to recognized concerns or guiding questions. Without some type of focus, however, you might be collecting data forever. Useful information emerges, therefore, from the issues identified by participants, citizens, or staff. The proponents of the model argue that the evaluator should be free to choose the range of issues to use for an evaluation and should be able to recognize concerns and issues as they arise.

In the Goal-Free Model, the evaluator will usually talk to people, identify program elements, observe the program, discover purposes and concerns, conceptualize issues and problems, identify qualitative and/or quantitative data that needs to be collected, select methods and techniques to use (including the possibility of case studies), collect the data, match data and the issues of audiences, and prepare and deliver the report. The evaluator is a detective, in a way, as she or he tries to identify the important relationships and outcomes that exist within an organization or a program. Unlike the Goal-Attainment Model, however, the evaluator does not start out with a specific plan for what criteria will be measured. However, unlike the Intuitive Judgment Model, the data are systematically collected, recorded, and analyzed.

The Goal-Free evaluator uses logical analysis and observation as well as any other needed data collection methods. The drawback to this model of evaluation is that it may be time-consuming and some outcomes may be difficult to measure. The results, however, can be helpful in understanding in-depth aspects of recreation services.

Process or Systems Approach

The Systems Approach, as an important model of evaluation, is commonly used in understanding how a program or place contributes to the overall mission of a recreation organization. This model is process-oriented in general and does not use objectives. The model is used to establish a working understanding of an organization and it is capable of achieving end products such as the provision of services. An important element of the Systems Approach is the focus on outputs, which is one important component of the Logic Model. The purpose of the Systems Approach is to examine the degree to which an organization realizes its goals under a given set of conditions. The type and timing of data collected depends on the structure of the system or organization.

The Systems Approach is often used in management planning and has specific designs that are developed. Examples include Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT), Critical Path Method (CPM), Program Planning and Budgeting System (PPBS), Management by Objectives (MBO), and Total Performance Measurement

(TPM). Data related to inputs, process, and outputs result in feedback that is used for decision-making.

If you were to develop an evaluation system for a recreation, park, or leisure services organization, you would likely use a Systems Approach in determining how evaluation fits into the overall operation of an organization. Fiscal evaluations also are frequently used within a systems context.

Within recreation organizations, program planning is often based on a Systems Approach with evaluation being just one part of it. The strategy and goals are the inputs, the program design and implementation are the process, and the evaluation yields information that provides a means for feedback regarding outcomes. Planning, delivery, and evaluation are related to one another. An evaluator can examine how an organization is operating to determine how effective it is. Within the Systems or Process Model, an entire organization or just components of it can be examined. An evaluation through this model results in the determination of outcomes as related to processes used by an organization. The Program Quality focus will be discussed in more detail later in this book. The model assumes that different decisions require different types of information inputs. Decisions are based on continuation, modification, or termination of the program, staff, or whatever is being measured, which is usually the result of using any of the models.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Models

These six models provide a way to frame evaluation. They offer a context for assumptions for determining how to set criteria and collect data. The models are not mutually exclusive but each has a set of assumptions that should be considered in using them. They are applied in varying degrees when conducting evaluation projects. In undertaking an evaluation project, it is essential to set the stage by determining which model best sets the framework for the evaluation.

Table 1.5(3) provides a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the models. If experts and standards exist, Professional Judgment might be best. If goals and measurable objectives exist for a program, evaluating by using those goals and objectives as the foundation for Goal-Attainment or the Logic Model will be best. If you

Table 1.5(3)

Summary of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Evaluation Models

Model	Strengths	Weaknesses
Intuitive	• Relatively easy • Day-to-day analysis	• Not scientific • Lacks reliability
Professional Judgment	• Uses expert opinions • Standards based • Easy for organization • Less time required	• Must have experts • Expensive • Standards must be valid
Goal Attainment	• Most commonly used • Uses pre-established instruments • Objectivity	• Need good goals and objectives • Requires measurement • Too much focus on goals possible
Logic Model	• Requires assessment of goals and inputs • Provides a model for evaluation • Links program directly to evaluation • May be simple or detailed • Minimizes faulty assumptions • Provides short- and long-term view	• Requires careful planning • Represents intentions and not reality • Focus is only on positive change • May oversimplify process • May stifle creativity
Goal-Free	• Allows for qualitative data • Examines actual effects • Uses logical analysis • Allows depth analysis	• Goal-free impossible • Possible bias • Time-consuming • Evaluator driven
Systems Approach	• Process-oriented • Useful in management • Integrates elements within organization	• May be too broad based • Complicated to use • Can't evaluate everything

are interested in finding out what is happening without comparing actual outcomes to established goals, the Goal-Free approach might be superior. If evaluators are examining one component of a recreation organization in relation to the inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes, then a Systems Approach will enable them to choose the elements to examine in relation to the broad mission of the organization. The evaluation model chosen will depend upon the purposes of the evaluation and the situation that currently exists.

From Ideas to Reality

Choosing evaluation approaches or models is not the most exciting task that an evaluator undertakes, yet the approach is necessary so that appropriate decisions can be made about criteria and methods. The six models outlined here might be used in any number of ways depending upon how an organization is set up. For example, say you wanted to find out if your older adult program was contributing to the life satisfaction of the individuals who participated. You could use the Intuitive Judgment Model and informally observe the older adults and draw conclusions. You might invite external evaluators (Professional Judgment) to help you determine the contribution that your program is making to the lives of older adults. You could use the goals and objectives set for the program (Goal-Attainment or Logic Model) as the basis for collecting data to determine how the program affects life satisfaction. Or you might use a Goal-Free Approach and do in-depth interviews to find out how the older adult programs affect the individuals who participate. The exact model is not as important as the framework that you decide to use for your evaluation. The models simply provide a roadmap for making decisions about how an actual project might best be conducted by helping you determine criteria and ways to collect data.

Now that you have studied this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Describe the differences between the six models presented
- Choose an appropriate model given a particular situation that requires evaluation

1.6 Those Who Fail to Plan, Plan to Fail:

The Five Ps of Evaluation

Evaluation doesn't just happen. It requires planning. Furthermore, every aspect of recreation services has the potential to be the object of evaluation or research. As indicated earlier, some of this evaluation may be intuitive, but in most cases, a systematic evaluation is necessary. Whenever a new program is begun or a new staff member is hired, some plan for evaluation ought to be considered. The purpose of this chapter and the next is to introduce areas of evaluation in recreation services and the systems that can be developed for evaluating within an organization.

For the purposes of our discussion and to help you remember the areas of evaluation, we would like to discuss the five Ps of evaluation: program quality and improvement, personnel, places, policies/administration, and participant outcomes. You should realize, however, that these five areas are not discrete and tend to overlap. For example, a recreation program is of little use unless some kind of outcome is evident with a participant. The policies of an organization may affect the program. The nature of a place in terms of the area or facility will affect the job of the staff person or personnel. Seldom do we evaluate any one of these aspects alone without also acknowledging how they relate to one another.

We will use these five Ps to simplify and describe the areas of evaluation within recreation organizations. This chapter will describe how to develop a system for evaluation and will cover three of the five P areas: personnel, policies, and places. We focus on program quality/improvement and participant outcomes separately in the next chapter because they are such essential areas of evaluation today.

Evaluation Systems

Staff in recreation organizations should design a continuous and systematic program of evaluation. Using standards for accredita-

tion is one system, but additional evaluation should be undertaken as needed. Most organizations evaluate various aspects of their program, like staff performance, but staff in organizations should have a clear system for how evaluation fits into their overall operations.

Not every aspect of an organization needs to be evaluated every year. In fact, for available time and money, it may be more useful to determine a system for when evaluations ought to be done. Rather than doing piecemeal evaluations, the development of a plan so the entire organization or system can be evaluated over a period of time, for example every three years, may be beneficial. Not every program has to be evaluated each time it is offered, nor does every participant need to be included in the evaluation. Programs especially should not be evaluated if the data obtained are not going to be used. A system can enable you, as a professional, to make sure that all Ps are covered over a period of time. A system in place that results in useful data can enable you to make enlightened decisions concerning the entire organization.

To develop a system, you must know which Ps will be evaluated and how often this process should be done. A systematic plan might be developed by establishing goals and objectives, examining conclusions from previous evaluations, examining strategic plans or long-range plans that exist in the organization, and then setting a schedule.

Figure 1.6(1) gives a pictorial example of how an evaluation system might be organized. You would determine the what (the part of the organization to be evaluated; one of the "Ps"); the why (the reason for evaluating that part of the organization); the when (timing related to how often and when during the year, which will be discussed in more detail later in this unit); the how (the methods that will be used and the necessary resources such as funds, and supplies); and the who (who specifically will be involved with implementing the evaluation).

You cannot evaluate everything at once. To try to assess too much usually results in poor conceptualizations of projects or failure to think about the issues involved. Further, the amount of data generated would be staggering. Those people participating in the evaluation also can become overwhelmed by the complexity and endlessness of evaluation unless a system is established.

Several practical considerations apply to most evaluation systems. First, keep in mind the time and financial constraints of evalu-

What *What part of our organization will we evaluate?*	Why *What are we hoping to get out of this evaluation?*	When *When and how often will this evaluation take place?*	How *What methods will we use to evaluate this part of our organization?*	Who *Who will be involved with conducting this evaluation?*
Program				
Participants				
Personnel				
Physical Space				
Policy				

Figure 1.6(1). A System for Evaluation

ation. On one hand, evaluation ought to be considered an investment. "Quick and dirty" evaluations are usually not nearly as helpful as well-planned evaluation projects. On the other hand, the more money and time spent on evaluation, the less is available for program, staff, and the development and maintenance of areas and facilities. A balance is needed so the investment of time, energy, and money result in informative data for evidenced-based decision-making.

Second, in developing a system, keep in mind that evaluations have political overtones. In determining the worth or value of something, you want to be sure that the criteria and measurement are appropriate in the eyes of those who will use the data. You also must consider the scope of evaluation and what it will cover, the size of the program, duration, program input, complexity, and span of goals. More about the political implications will be discussed later in this unit.

Third, to have a system in place means that you have established appropriate reasons for evaluating based on whether staff want the information, the funding organization requires it, or you need to

make decisions about improving or changing a program. The remainder of this chapter will focus on systematically evaluating the Ps of personnel, policies, and places.

Personnel

In most recreation organizations, the biggest expenditures go to staff salaries and benefits. Some of these staff are full-time, some part-time, and some seasonal. Volunteers are also considered unpaid staff. The benefits of staff evaluation include improving job performance and providing feedback for the personal development of staff, regardless of whether they are young and in paid positions of responsibility for the first time, have been a professional for 30 years, or periodically volunteer in the organization. Since evaluation is so important in the personnel process, mid-year or formative evaluations as well as end of the year, or summative, evaluations are frequently used. Most public organizations require yearly personnel evaluations, at least for paid staff.

The formalities of personnel evaluations are up to the organization, but generally staff personnel files are kept that provide documented evidence of the performance of staff. Staff performance evaluations are usually based on a combination of the goals and objectives found in the job descriptions and on the performance outcomes that result from doing the assigned jobs. Ideally, the evaluation should consist of an examination of the relationship between the criteria as stated in the job description and the performance of the staff member.

A well-written accurate job description is the basis for an individual staff evaluation. The staff member ought to know from the very beginning the criteria upon which she or he will be evaluated. The staff member must also receive feedback concerning the judgment that is made by the evaluator. The feedback to staff ideally occurs on an everyday, informal basis as well as during the formal process that is scheduled as part of a yearly performance appraisal.

Personnel evaluation is often called performance appraisal or performance evaluation. Most administration textbooks go into detail about this form of evaluation, but we will provide a bit of background so the principles of evaluation can be related to personnel. These personnel evaluations are formal, structured, and systematic ways to measure an employee's job-related behavior.

Employees at all levels ought to be evaluated at least annually and preferably more often. Regular volunteers should be evaluated from time to time as well as be asked to provide input for elements of the evaluation system. A performance evaluation is not just a single activity but takes into account observations and intuitive judgments made by supervisors and colleagues throughout the year, as well as feedback from participants in some cases. The criteria for personnel evaluation may vary greatly depending on the organization, but usually it is best to address aspects of the job description and not an individual's personality. The purpose of the evaluation should focus on improvement and not necessarily on retaining or firing an employee, or giving that individual a salary raise. Salaries and bonuses, however, are generally based on performance in most, but not all, organizations.

The procedure used in employee evaluation is comprehensive and generally reflects the evaluation trilogy related to assigned evaluation duties: determining criteria for evaluation based on those duties, gathering information about how the employee performs, appraising the performance, providing feedback to the employee, and making decisions and adjustments about the employee's performance. These decisions may relate to letting the employee know her or his relative value in the organization; identifying people for promotion; enhancing communication among supervisors, staff, and participants; providing directions for further professional development and on-the-job training; and helping to establish and achieve career goals.

Data for personnel evaluations can be obtained from administrators, other employees, and/or participants. Table 1.6(2) shows an example of a generic evaluation form that might be used with an employee. The supervisor would use this information in providing feedback to the employee along with other information obtained about the specific job duties that might be performed.

Table 1.6(2)

Example of a Personnel Evaluation Form (source unknown)

	Outstanding	Above Average	Average	Needs Improving	Poor
1. Demonstrates insight and vision regarding objectives and long-range plans	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Possesses the physical stamina and drive to handle the rigors of the position	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Demonstrates pleasant personality and good commun- ication skills	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Is consistent and fair; does not play favorites	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Solves problems rationally; can come to the heart of things	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Gets along well with other people	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Demonstrates ability to work together as a team	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Is approachable and willing to make changes	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Takes personal interest in each participant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Welcomes and respects the opinions of others	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Is continuously alert to new ideas	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Is well informed at all times regarding the total operation and how s/he contributes to it	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Another popular type of personnel evaluation is known as the 360-degree evaluation. This process provides employees the opportunity to receive performance feedback from their supervisor, four to eight reporting staff members or coworkers, and in some cases, even participants or customers. Most often, 360-degree feedback tools are completed by each individual involved in the assessment, and the individual being evaluated uses the tool for a self-assessment. The feedback from this evaluation allows individuals to understand how their effectiveness as an employee, coworker, or staff member is viewed by others. The most effective 360-degree feedback processes provide feedback that is based on behaviors that other employees can see. If done correctly, the 360-degree feedback can help individuals understand their strengths and weaknesses, and contribute insights into aspects of their work needing professional development. Although a valuable choice for personnel evaluation, this method usually requires considerable time and coordination due to the number of other people needed to complete the process.

Policies/Administration

Evaluation is used for analyzing policies, procedures, and administrative practices. Administrative aspects that may be evaluated include the way that an agency or business is organized and operated. Budget analysis is an example of one way an organization might examine policies and administration.

A professional might do community surveys to ascertain support for a particular activity, to measure the diversity of opinions, and gain information from the public at large. Evaluations such as these are sometimes called needs assessments because they can allow an organization to gain more comprehensive knowledge of the community, its people, their needs, their opinions, and special problems. Policy and administrative decisions may be made based on community dissatisfaction, perceived lack of opportunity, the need to equalize or upgrade services, and to meet new demands.

Cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness are econometric models that can also be used as a means for evaluation in leisure services. Cost-benefit analysis relates the costs of a program or an operation to the benefits realized from it, which are expressed in dollar figures. Ben-

efits other than dollars are, however, often hard to quantify. Cost-effectiveness is easier because it is the ratio of costs to revenue generated. A program that generated enough income to pay the expenses would have a cost-effectiveness of 1:1. Per capita costs may be related to amount of cost per person. For example, we might have a Little League program that costs $20,000 for 150 children. The cost-effectiveness would then be $133 per child. The cost-effectiveness of one program could then be related to other programs sponsored by the organization.

Performance-based program budgets are another common administrative method of evaluating how money is spent in relation to the outcomes of the programs. In this budgeting approach, the professional breaks down work or program activities into detailed subunits for the purpose of determining the specific costs of each of these units. These breakdowns are sometimes used to set the cost for a given program based on the expenditures. The information provided by the budget is useful to top administrators and to other policy boards who want to see the big picture. It also helps to think about programs in terms of unit costs. The bigger the recreation enterprise, the more useful this budgeting approach is for administrative evaluation.

Economic impact is a specific example of a policy/administrative area that might be measured. Economic impact relates to the amount of revenue activity generated in an area due to a particular event such as a festival or other tourist activities. For example, for every dollar spent on tourism promotion in a community, your evaluation could show that five dollars of income might be generated in the community from tourist spending. Economic impact also expands beyond primary initial spending to secondary spending, such as how the organization that earned money from the event reinvests that money into the community through employee payroll and other spending.

Evaluations of the "bottom lines" in recreation programs are usually most interested in the return on investment (ROI). However, when completing these economic evaluations, ROI may actually be focused on Return on Influence where the actual dollar amounts in investments may be more importantly focused on the influence (e.g., new stakeholders, increased awareness) that comes from successful implementation of a policy or program.

Places (Areas and Facilities)

The use of metrics such as the number of participants is a common way to measure outputs that indicate how well a recreation services organization is doing. When we evaluate places, we may examine many aspects including how a facility is used as well as safety and legal mandates. Pre-established standards are often helpful in evaluating risk management and safety concerns in the facilities, equipment, and landscape of an organization. Routine checks of facilities and equipment in the form of walk-throughs as well as scheduled maintenance procedures and the keeping of maintenance logs and checklists (for example, climbing wall equipment or departmental vehicles), can serve as a formal system of evaluation.

Master plans created for long-range planning are a form of assessment and evaluation. In these plans, one staff member might examine the distribution of recreation spaces and facilities. Table 1.6(3) shows an example of such a checklist that might be used for evaluating what exists or does not exist in a community. Carrying capacity, defined as the amount of use an area can take before recreation experiences become diminished, is another example of evaluation and research applied to places.

One tool that provides a visually interesting way to evaluating places as well as recreation services is spatial analysis through the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS). The GIS technique integrates spatial and demographic information. GIS is being used for numerous applications, including urban planning, land use mapping and facilities management, environmental impact assessment, wildlife and park management, identification of socioeconomic demographics, and geographic surveying and mapping.

GIS consists of census information combined with resource data that enables a professional to pictorially display an element such as the distribution of people around a park. Based on that mapping, decisions can then be made about new landscape designs or where activity areas might best be placed. GIS also allows for an analysis of demographic characteristics in an area. For example, a map could indicate locations of community centers and the concentrations of racial groups that exist in a city, based on data obtained from census information.

Table 1.6(3)

Example of a Neighborhood Evaluation Checklist for Facilities for the State of Pennsylvania (adapted from Lundegren & Farrell, 1985, p. 191)

Recommended Component	Yes	No
1. Turf for field sports	___	___
2. Multipurpose, hard surface, all-weather court area	___	___
3. Space for recreation sports	___	___
4. Individual and dual sports	___	___
5. Water facility—outdoor pool	___	___
6. Winter activity area	___	___
a. Ice area	___	___
b. Sledding slope	___	___
7. Outdoor education area	___	___
8. Natural area for nonmotorized travel	___	___
9. Communication space for dance, drama, music	___	___
10. Building	___	___
a. Multipurpose meeting rooms	___	___
b. Assembly area	___	___
c. Specialized activity area	___	___
d. Physical recreation area	___	___

GIS technology goes far beyond maps and site analysis for use in planning and policymaking. It also has immediate applications for marketing strategies. In addition, GIS is not only useful for evaluation of places and facilities but has implications for information about assessing the needs for programs, as we will discuss further in the next chapter. Regardless of whether you are a land use planner, a parks and recreation director, or a therapeutic recreation specialist working with older adults, GIS applications will likely become a part of your evaluation process. Figure 1.6(4) shows an example of a GIS map.
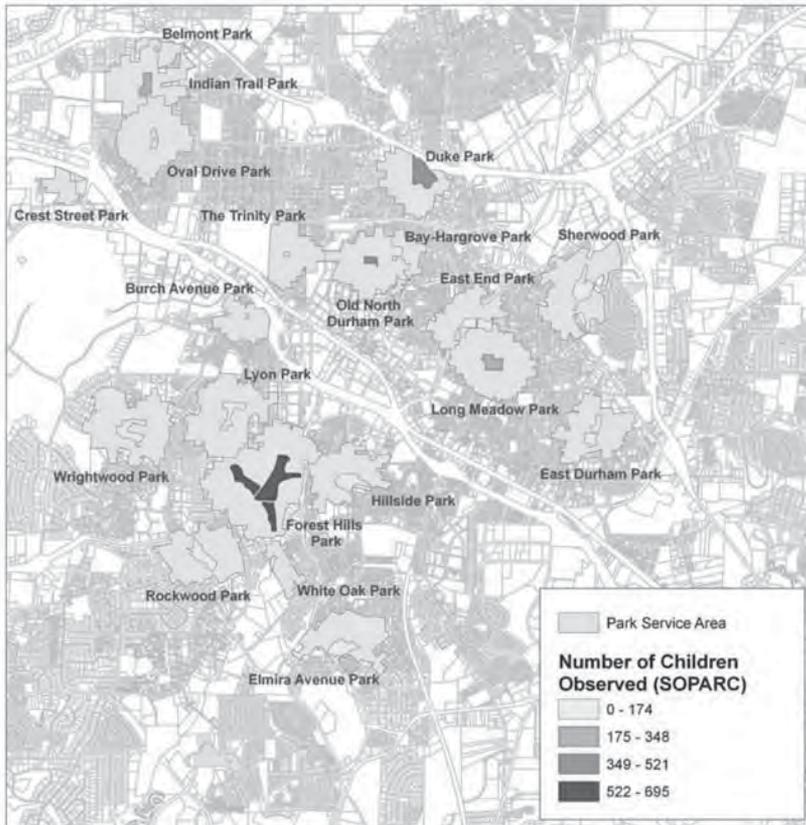
Figure 1.6(4). Example of Information from a GIS MAP

A recent example of how GIS is being used in public parks and recreation is the National Recreation and Park Association's Park Metrics program, formerly known as PRORAGIS. It is a resource for agencies to store and manage their operating and GIS mapping data. As a national database, the power of Park Metrics is its ability to run customized and comparative reports to help agencies effectively manage, evaluate, and plan their resources and facilities.

From Ideas to Reality

Many aspects of organizations can be evaluated. A recreation professional doing evaluation, however, must be able to make decisions about what can be feasibly and systematically evaluated at any given

time. Not everything can be evaluated at once, but over time and with thoughtful planning, a system of evaluation will develop. For example, many organizations have good staff evaluation systems in place that will simply need to be maintained. The professional might then focus on determining if places are being adequately evaluated. These current ideas taken in conjunction with the areas of programs and participants discussed in the next chapter can provide a basis for a sound evaluation system within any community or organization.

Now that you have studied this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Describe three of the five Ps related to personnel, policies, and places and what components of each might be evaluated
- Make a plan to determine what aspects of the five Ps might be evaluated in an organization over a 5-year period

<div style="text-align:center">

1.7 From Good to Great:

Evaluating Program Quality and Participants

</div>

Running a recreation program is not difficult. Running a quality program that results in positive outcomes for participants, however, is a challenge. Probably the most common association with evaluation that most recreation professionals have relates to program evaluation. Programs are most often evaluated regarding participant outcomes, although program quality and means for improvement have influences that can be measured relative to communal, environmental, and economic impact.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the two Ps of program quality and participant outcomes. The Ps overlap with one another. However, as indicated in the Logic Model, they have a direct relationship to one another in many ways. The underlying assumptions we make are that positive outcomes should occur as a result of efforts (i.e., an investment of time, staff, and money), and no matter how good the participant outcomes are, program improvement is always possible.

A Primer on Benefits and Outcomes

The notion of benefits or positive outcomes from recreation is not a new idea. Since the beginning of the organized recreation movement in the late 1800s, volunteers and professionals have extolled the values, importance, and benefits of recreation and associated areas such as camping and youth development. In the mid-1990s, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) defined the *Benefits Movement* for the field and articulated the need to focus on the individual, communal, economic, and environmental benefits that occur because of recreation programs in a community. The premise of benefits is that recreation agencies must develop effective programs and services that influence the quality of life for citizens—programs, facilities, and opportunities that make their lives better. Awareness of

the benefits and potential positive outcomes of recreation is essential. "The benefits are endless…" is a slogan that NRPA used to capitalize on this idea of benefits.

A benefit is defined as anything that is good for a person or an entity. A benefit might also relate to a desired condition that is maintained or changed. A benefit also equals an outcome or end result. NRPA has identified four areas of benefits. *Individual* benefits include improving health and wellness, building self-esteem, providing alternatives to self-destructive behavior, reducing stress, and providing opportunities for living a more balanced life. *Communal* benefits include building stronger families, reducing loneliness and alienation, enhancing community spirit, reducing crime, and promoting ethnic and cultural harmony. *Economic* benefits are associated with attracting business relocation and expansion, contributing to healthy and productive work forces, attracting tourism, and enhancing real estate values. *Environmental* benefits might include protecting natural resources and open space areas, enhancing air and water quality, reducing congestion, and providing and protecting wildlife habitat. All of these areas would likely be included in evaluations to determine if, in fact, quality recreation services are resulting in positive outcomes for citizens and for communities. Documenting these outcomes is the vital role that evaluation can play.

Overview of Program Quality Evaluation

One of the chief ways that recreation organizations provide services, besides building facilities and outdoor areas, is through programs. Programs, however, are not just a bunch of activities that are planned for people. Programs should have a clear purpose and should have identifiable goals. A quality program results in activities that are designed and implemented to meet certain outcomes that address specific individual and community needs. Quality programs should address outcome goals.

Evaluation is one of the prime components of a program when it is included along with the phases of assessment, objectives, and implementation. Evaluation, however, may not occur only at the end of a program but may happen throughout it and/or even at the beginning. Thus, as illustrated in Figure 1.7(1), evaluation in recreation

may occur at all stages of the program. Evaluating programs at all stages of their development may be important to assure that the desired results are obtained.
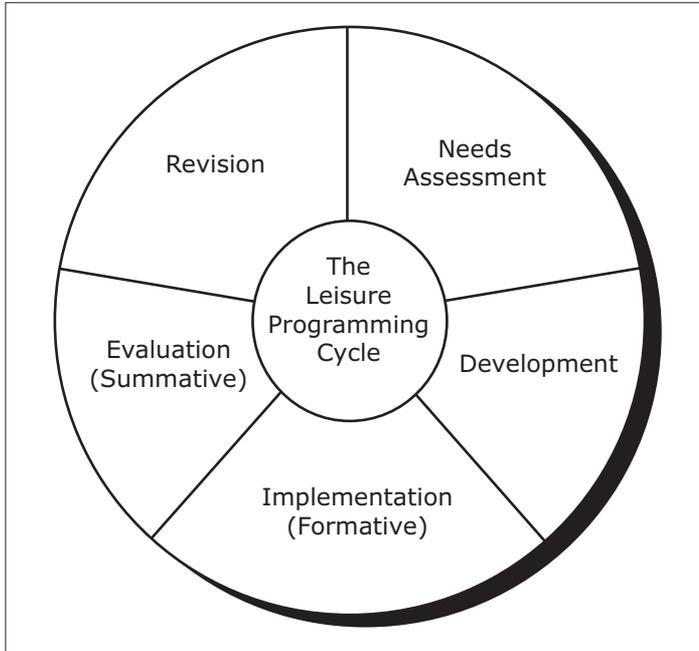
Figure 1.7(1). The Relationship between Program and Evaluation (adapted from Howe and Carpenter, 1985)

Many possibilities exist for developing program improvement evaluations. A look at the levels of program evaluation adapted from the longstanding work of Bennett (1982) may be useful in further understanding program evaluation. These ideas are also sometimes termed a "hierarchy of effects." Notice how these levels might sound similar to the boxes included in a logic model.

Figure 1.7(2) shows four basic levels of program evaluation. The first aspect relates to the participation or inputs to a program. This level may include the following:

1. **Inputs**—resources available and expended such as money, paid staff and volunteer time, facilities, and equipment.
2. **Activities**—the strategies, techniques, and undertakings and organizational processes that are used, including publicity, actual activities, and the delivery of program.

```
ACTIONS                                         7 End Results

                                          6 Practice Change

LEARNING                           5 KASA Change

REACTION                    4 Reactions

                     3 People Involvement
PARTICIPATION

         2 Activities

    1
  Inputs
```
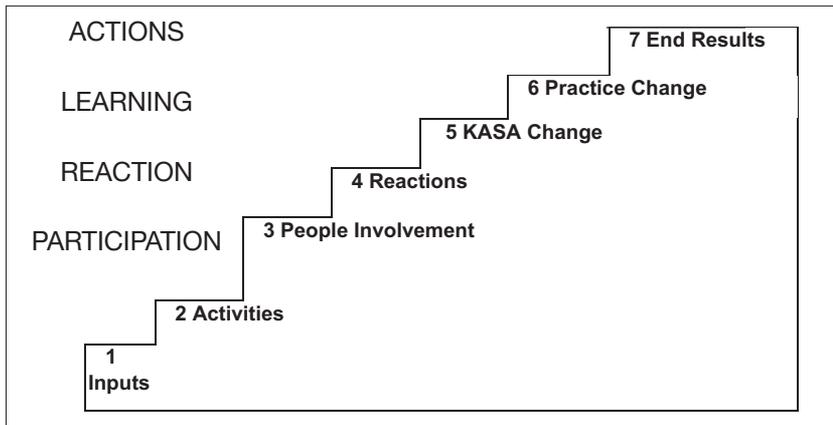
Figure 1.7(2). Levels of Program Evaluation

3. **People involvement**—the outputs, usually measured in terms of volume of activity pertaining to statistics and demographics, that describe the number of people, characteristics of people, frequency, and intensity of involvement.

A second broad level includes reactions, which can be likened to outputs:

4. **Reactions**—responses from the participants including degree of interest, like or dislike for activities, satisfaction, expectations, appeal, and opinions.

A third level gets into short-term and medium-term outcomes. It includes the benefits, new knowledge, and changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in program activities. For an abbreviation, this level is sometimes called KASA:

5. **KASA outcomes** include Knowledge (awareness, understanding, problem solving ability), Attitudes (feelings, change of interest, ideas, beliefs), Skills (verbal or physical abilities, new skills, improved performance, abilities), and Aspirations (desires, courses of action, new decisions).

A final, and the highest functioning, level includes actions that result in practice change or long-term outcomes or IMPACTS on individual or community life:

6. **Practice change outcomes**—adoption and application of knowledge, attitudes, skills, or aspirations to leisure or lifestyle.
7. **Long-term impact on quality of life outcomes**—social, economic, environmental, and individual consequences, how people are helped, hindered, or harmed as a result of this program.

The objective of this illustration of the levels of programming is to show how many different aspects might be evaluated in a program quality examination. Recreation professionals are frequently interested in how well they are designing and implementing quality programs and this information can be evaluated in the lower levels of the model. For an organization to function efficiently and effectively, these aspects must be considered. The outcomes and the significance of how recreation contributes to the quality of life, however, depend on the outcomes associated with impacts related to learning and actions (e.g., KASA, practice change, and impact on quality of life). Many of the outcomes are measured as individual change, which will be discussed in more detail in a following section. The important point to note is that evaluators must be aware of what they are measuring when any program evaluation focused on quality, processes, or improvement is undertaken.

One of the challenges in program evaluation is to avoid evaluating too many criteria at once. The seven levels identified above provide a framework for making decisions about what aspects of a program may be most important to evaluate. Most program evaluations do not measure, or often cannot measure, all seven levels. The evaluator must determine what the most important aspects are to evaluate and then design measurement instruments and evaluation projects to get at those.

Two examples of program evaluation forms are illustrated. Table 1.7(3) is an example of camper reactions and Table 1.7(4) shows how to measure inputs.

An Example of Program Quality

To illustrate another example of program quality and the quality improvement process, we will examine some work undertaken by the American Camp Association (ACA; 2007; 2008). This organization has designed two workbooks (also in online course format)

Table 1.7(3)

Camper Program Evaluation Reactions (source unknown)

| **Scoring:** |
| Awesome! = 5   Good = 4   Fair = 3   Yawn = 2   Boring = 1 |

Activities	**Score**	**Activities**	**Score**
Archery	——	Soccer	——
Battlefield Tour	——	Campfires	——
Crafts	——	Bible Classes	——
Canoeing	——	Swimming	——
Cycling	——	Nature	——
Hiking	——	Physical Fitness	——
Sports	——	Music	——
Basketball	——	Meals	——
Softball	——		

that address how to create positive youth outcomes (*Creating Positive Youth Outcomes*) and how to design programs (*Designing Quality Youth Programs*) as well as an online Program Improvement Toolbox that has instruction modules, measurement tools, staff training tips, and implementation tips.

An important distinction between outcomes measurement and the quality improvement process is that quality improvement focuses primarily on "point of service" (generally the environment provided by the organization and program staff) while outcomes measurement focuses on the ways the program influences the participant (outcomes). A combination of both is important, because you may not be able to "control" whether a measurable outcome actually occurs, but you can always control the quality of your organization and staff performance by setting the appropriate environment and staff training conducive to producing desired outcomes.

Table 1.7(4)

Parks and Recreation Department Program Outputs Evaluation

How are we serving you? Please take a minute to complete this brief questionnaire and return it directly to our staff. We value your participation and want to serve you better. Thank you.

Location _____ Date _____

Activity _____

Please check Yes or No: YES   NO

1. Was the staff courteous?   ____ ____
2. Was the facility clean and attractive?   ____ ____
3. Was the activity well-organized?   ____ ____
4. Was the area in a good state of repair?   ____ ____
5. Did the activity start on time?   ____ ____
6. Did you feel safe and comfortable at the facility?   ____ ____
7. Would you return to this facility for another activity?   ____ ____
8. Was the activity interesting?   ____ ____

9. Overall, how would you rate this activity (please check one)?
____ Excellent   ____ Good   ____ Fair   ____ Poor

10. What other activity would you like us to provide?

11. How did you hear about our classes/programs? Check one/or any that apply.

____ Mailed brochure	____ Yellow pages	____ TV
____ Picked up brochure	____ Flyer/poster	____ Newspaper
____ Friend	____ Radio	____ Referral
____ Online at Website	____ Called facility	____ Other

The value of designing outcomes and quality programs is in finding systematic ways to improve the likelihood that desired outcomes are reached. It is also a way to involve participants in shaping programs as well as demonstrating to stakeholders that an organization is committed to positive human development. The approach uses evaluation as a central process to document the effectiveness of strategies in the action plan.

Designing quality programs includes eight action steps:

1. Ask (assess) participants
2. Ask staff
3. Assess current practices
4. Brainstorm
5. Choose strategies
6. Take action (including staff training)
7. Share your plan
8. Evaluate and share the results

An important premise of program quality is to use intentional and purposeful actions to create positive change through an ongoing cycle of improvement. The results are greatest when making small changes in your program's strategies, policies, and activities. Evaluation includes assessing how participants and staff change as a result of the process. One of the biggest values to the improvement process is the dialogue that occurs between staff, administrators, and other stakeholders as a result of sharing the data. These discussions often identify staff training needs focused on improved practices, offer supports needed in programming, and suggest policy changes that enhance participant experiences. After going through this process, success can be measured by small incremental changes. These changes are a result of an assessment of effective strategies, thinking about directions for future programs, and empowering staff and participants who recognize they have a role in program improvement.

Participant Outcomes

The goal of most recreation organizations is to produce positive end results or outcomes from involvement in a particular program opportunities. Participant outcomes have emerged as a central area for evaluation. Some organizations refer to proof of these outcomes as impact research. As noted above, outcomes can refer to learnings (KASA) or action outcomes. Participant outcomes include what individuals know, think, can do, and how they behave or change (i.e., learn, do, become). Although the goal of recreation is to satisfy the participant in terms of her or his wants, or interests, we also hope that involvement addresses human needs that improve an individual's life and the life of the community.

We use the term "participants" throughout this book to refer to the people who receive recreation services. In applied cases, these participants might have other names such as consumers, clients, patients, guests, tourists, or campers. No matter what they are called, they all are involved in recreation endeavors and experiences. We are trying to change their lives positively in both short and long-term ways. The common goal of all recreation and human service programs is to make life better and more rewarding for people. For example, we may be interested in evaluating the acquisition of a certain skill level or the improvement in attitudes toward recreation or towards oneself. Self-constructs, including self-confidence and competence, are frequently assessed in participant outcome research. Table 1.7(5) provides an example of some outcomes/impact questions asked in a national Girl Scout study.

Table 1.7(5)

Outcome-Oriented Self Questions asked in a National Girl Scout Study (adapted from Girl Scouts of the USA, 2000)

DAL = Disagree a Lot
D = Disagree
A = Agree
AAL = Agree a Lot
DU = Don't Understand

It's okay that I'm good at doing some things but not good at doing other things.	DAL	D	A	AAL	DU
I know what I'm good at.	DAL	D	A	AAL	DU
I feel comfortable talking about my feelings with some people.	DAL	D	A	AAL	DU
I will let someone know if I'm afraid to do something.	DAL	D	A	AAL	DU
When I feel happy about something, I usually tell other people.	DAL	D	A	AAL	DU
My friends usually think my ideas are good.	DAL	D	A	AAL	DU
If I try hard, I can learn anything.	DAL	D	A	AAL	DU
I have good ideas.	DAL	D	A	AAL	DU

The value of measuring participant outcomes lies in assuring that the inputs and outputs addressed in recreation agencies really are making a difference. The Logic Model is useful in this regard because it takes into account how processes may impact outcomes. Therefore, accountability is important in measuring participant outcomes. This information, however, also results in improved services so that the outcomes are likely to occur over and over again.

Keep in mind that instruments designed to measure program processes should not be used to make judgments about participant outcomes. Although quality programs and best practices ought to lead to positive changes in people, the issues cannot be measured in the same way.

To do effective measurement of participant outcomes, several steps must be employed related to the evaluation trilogy. First, the outcomes you want to measure (i.e., the criteria) must be determined. Then you must determine what data are needed to measure the outcomes. Data must be collected and analyzed and compared to the intended outcomes. Finally, you need to use the findings in the form of conclusions and recommendations.

For example, if we wanted to know if a midnight basketball program reduces the youth crime rate in a community, we would determine the desired outcome is to reduce the crime rate, measure the crime rate before the program started and then again periodically during the program, and make judgments about the value or worth of the program in relation to the outcome of reduced crime. We recognize that other good things might happen to individuals as a result of the midnight basketball program, but in this use of participant outcomes, we would focus specifically on determining goals and objectives that could be measured.

Different populations may need to be examined using different tools if participant outcome evaluation is to be effective. These opportunities will be discussed in greater depth later in this text, but several illustrations may be useful. For example, evaluating programs for children and youth might be quite different than for adults. Instruments must be age appropriate for children. Evaluators must be concerned that evaluation is diversity sensitive and that evaluators are aware of their own cultural competence. For example, people for

whom English is not their first language may understand the wording of instruments differently and may not score in the same ways as others who interpret the questions differently. People with disabilities are another group that may interpret instruments differently than the evaluator intended if their needs are not considered. Further, as we will discuss in Unit Two, pilot testing is a way to address some of these potential problems with different populations.

Outcomes evaluation is not nearly as easy to do as evaluating inputs, activities, and reactions. There are no magic formulas to measure participant outcomes. Yet, this area must be addressed because it demonstrates a commitment to a sustained evaluation process focused on program quality improvement and impact.

Five Ps Summary

Developing an evaluation system is not easy, but it can be exciting. As you work through this book, however, certain aspects of how the Ps can be systematically analyzed within any organization over a period of time should become evident. Table 1.7(6) summarizes examples of ways that the five Ps might be used in recreation organization evaluations.

From Ideas to Reality

Recreation experiences offer many potential positive outcomes for individuals and communities. Program evaluation is a huge area and the evaluator might want to focus on particular programs over time and the myriad benefits that might occur. Program evaluation includes program quality, program processes, and program improvement. Assessing these aspects is closely linked to participant outcomes. When evaluating participant outcomes, you might want to examine an outcome such as skill development in a particular area. The possibilities are endless and the evaluator must use a system to determine the most important criteria to evaluate given the time, money, and expertise that may exist within an organization.

Table 1.7(6)

Summary of Components of the 5 Ps of Evaluation

Participant Outcomes
    Motivation/Satisfaction
    Changes in Attitudes as Outcomes
    Changes in Knowledge as Outcomes
    Changes in Skills and Abilities as Outcomes
    Carry-over into Other Situations
    How Individuals Interact
    Demographic Characteristics
Program Quality and Improvement
    Effective Leadership
    Promotion of Program
    Participant Gains
    Risk Management
Place
    Safety Concerns
    Master Planning
    Adequate Facilities
Policies/Administration
    Accountability of Budget
    Cost-Benefit Analysis
    Cost-Effectiveness Analysis
    Equitable Provision of Services
Personnel
    Performance Appraisal
    Assess Training Needs
    Provide Feedback for Improvement

All of the Ps are important and all can be evaluated in a variety of ways. The undertakings must be carefully considered if appropriate and useful evaluations can be used to document benefits and values of the services and improve on programs for the future.

Now that you have studied this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Determine when to use the levels of program evaluation
- Articulate how program quality, program processes, and participant outcomes relate to one another
- Discuss the value of measuring participant outcomes
- Give examples of using the five Ps of evaluation

1.8 A Time for Evaluation

The five Ps of recreation services (program quality, participant outcomes, personnel, places, and policy/administration) can be evaluated in different sequences and ways. Timing can be related to the three areas including assessment, formative, and summative evaluations. We have referred to these time-related ways of thinking about evaluation previously in this unit, but they will be described further here.

Timing of evaluations can profoundly affect the process, as the temporal sequence changes the evaluator's approach. Evaluation may be done at the beginning (assessment), during the course of a program/project (formative), or at the end of the program/year (summative).

These three approaches can be illustrated through a classroom example. Some professors may want to know how much students know about a particular topic at the beginning of a semester. They may give a quiz or exam on the first day of class to assess the knowledge level or attitudes that students have about a subject. Many professors are required to give final exams, which are summative evaluations. They tell the instructor what happened at the end of the course, but at that point, little can be done to change the learning or lack of learning that occurred. For this reason, many instructors give midterm exams that might be thought of as formative evaluations. When these midterms are given, the instructor then has the opportunity to immediately improve the class if the learning has not occurred as planned. Three different timings of the evaluations or exams give different information.

Assessment, formative, or summative evaluations may occur within any of the Ps. These three ways of doing evaluation also are based on criteria that must be determined before an evaluation project is undertaken.

Assessment usually examines some type of need and is the foundation for further planning; formative evaluation uses an examination of the progress or process; and summative evaluation measures the product referred to as outcomes, impacts, effectiveness, and/or

overall efficiency. Thus, the criteria developed for an evaluation project will depend on its timing and whether the use of the evaluation will be for planning, determining progress, or measuring the results.

Assessments and Planning

Assessment is a process of determining and specifically defining a program, facility, staff member, participant's behavior, or administrative procedure. Needs assessments are often conducted in community recreation programs. These assessments identify the differences between "what is" and "what should be." The needs assessment can result in a process of prioritizing information to use in programs, places, policies, or personnel. Therapeutic recreation specialists use assessment as the initial evaluation necessary to plan intervention strategies and serve as a baseline for measuring client outcomes.

Assessment provides a set of outcomes or judgments that focus on gaps between current aspects of the Ps and desired results. Assessments also provide the direction for reducing those gaps. Assessments may determine answers to such questions as "What is the socioeconomic profile of a community?" "What do citizens want?" "What are they willing to pay for?" "What forms of recreation services are needed?" Needs are complex and often hard to understand, so an assessment evaluation can help to address such aspects as the context of need and how needs can be used in planning. Assessments can also determine the interests of individuals or their willingness to pay for particular services.

Assessment evaluation assumes that you want to find out where to begin. Where to begin applies regardless of whether you are assessing a participant, the resources available in a community, or the needs for training a new staff member. To collect data for a needs assessment, for example, a plan must be devised. The plan usually includes defining what you want to know, developing a plan of action, generating goals, collecting data about "what is," analyzing data for discrepancies between "what is" and "what should be," and then developing a plan of action for the desired intervention or for the programs to be initiated. The assessment is based on determining criteria, collecting evidence, and making judgments about where any of the Ps of your organization are now, where they should go in the future, and how to get there.

Table 1.8 shows an example of a popular needs assessment and evaluation approach being used in communities and organizations across the United States. The Search Institute (1996) developed 40 developmental assets designed to be the building blocks for development for young people so they can grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. As an assessment tool, a community might examine how some of these assets are or are not being addressed within an organization of community.

Table 1.8

Examples of the 40 Developmental Assets identified by Search Institute (adapted from Leffert, Benson, P. L., Scales, P. C., Sharma, A. R., Drake, D. R., & Blyth, D. A., 1998)

Support
1. Family support: family life provides high levels of love and support.
3. Other adult relationships: young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.

Empowerment
7. Community values youth: young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
8. Youth as resources: young people are given useful roles in the community.

Constructive Use of Time
17. Creative activities: young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
18. Youth programs: young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.
19. Religious community: young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
20. Time at home: young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

Social Competencies
32. Planning and decision making: young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
33. Interpersonal competence: young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.

Positive Identity
39. Sense of purpose: young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
40. Positive view of personal future: young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

The only time you do not need to conduct an assessment is when you are sure of the goals and objectives for your organization, program, participants, or staff and when that information is complete, correct, valid, and useful. An assessment may be done internally or externally, depending on the particular situation.

Formative and Process Evaluation

Formative and summative evaluations may not be measuring different aspects of recreation services, but the timing is such that the results often are used in different ways. In general, formative evaluation is concerned more with organizational processes such as efficiency and effectiveness, while summative evaluation is concerned with the overall performance objectives, outcomes, or results.

When interested in examining the processes and progress toward goals associated with an organization, we often use formative evaluation. Formative evaluation is defined as the systematic examination of steps in the development and implementation of a program, organizational structure, policy, or staff person. Formative evaluation occurs while a program or administrative procedure is in progress and is used to examine the process as it is occurring within the organization. Feedback is provided early so that revisions can be made and weaknesses pointed out while there is still time to correct them.

The value of formative evaluation lies in the changes that can be made while a staff member is working, when a budget is being used, or when a program is happening. Examples of process evaluation questions that might be asked are "Is the program attracting a sufficient number of participants?" "How are staff contacting participants?" "Are some media methods working better than others?" "Are the participants making progress toward their individual goals?" "Will the program break even or make money?"

An example of how formative evaluation might be used could relate to university teaching by faculty. An instructor could do a formative evaluation at the midterm of the semester to determine how a class is going. She or he might ask such questions as: "What is the instructor doing that is contributing to your learning?" "What are you, the student, doing that is contributing to your learning?" "What could the instructor do to improve your learning?" "What could you

do to improve your learning?" From those data, the instructor might make changes to enhance the learning process. Similarly, the use of this type of formative evaluation might result in students evaluating their behavior and making changes as well. This formative evaluation allows for changes to be made midway rather than waiting for a summative evaluation at the end of the semester that will not benefit the students who are currently taking a class.

Another example of a formative process might refer to the concept of quality of service. Professionals in tourism and other areas of recreation have a central interest in service quality. The intent is to use any number of methods to examine how services are provided. Tangible and intangible aspects can be measured such as physical facilities, equipment, appearance of personnel, reliability and responsiveness of personnel, and attention to users. By comparing what participants or customers expect and what they experience, an organization can make formative changes to provide better services for present and future participants.

Another common formative evaluation is done with seasonal staff. In this process, staff are evaluated after the first two weeks or midway through a summer to see how they are doing. At this point in time, changes can be made in duties or needed training can be provided to address whatever potential problems are uncovered. Rather than waiting until the end of the season to give a staff member an evaluation, the formative evaluation allows for feedback that can be used to improve or to change immediately.

Summative and Product Evaluation

When most people think of evaluation they tend to think of the final evaluation, the evaluation that occurs at the end of something that measures the outcomes or the end results. A grade at the end of the semester or the bonus/pay raise at the end of the year are examples of how a summative evaluation might be applied. Summative evaluation uses an overall examination of impact and effectiveness that is completed at the end of a program or the end of the year. A decision to continue or discontinue a program is one way to use summative evaluation, although the information gained

in a summative evaluation can also be applied to improving future programs. Formative evaluation can occur within any stage of organization process, whereas summative only occurs at the end of the year, the end of a program, or some set temporal boundary.

A common form of summative evaluation is outcome or impact evaluation, which ascertains if a program produced the intended effects. In particular, an evaluator might be interested in participants' reactions to a program as well as their learning or practice change. Sometimes, immediately after a program is not the best time to evaluate long-term outcomes. Some studies of outcomes of youth at camp, for example, were measured not only as a pretest before camp and a posttest on the last day of camp, but also measured as outcomes six months later to see if the changes that occurred in camp had remained over the long term (Thurber, Schuler, Scanlin, & Henderson, 2007).

In summative evaluation, we are interested in determining the net effects of a program, policy, or place/facility. The results are comparative in that you examine what happened based on where an organization began. For example as noted previously, experimental designs often are used for the purpose of summative evaluation. A pretest is given before a program and a posttest after it is over to determine the impact of a program. In another example, the bottom line of impact analysis relates to a comparison of what did happen after implementing the program with what would have happened had the program not been implemented.

Summative evaluation may be measured related to different levels of program evaluation (e.g., participation, reactions, learning, or actions). For example, we might look at learning immediately after a program and/or examine long-term changes in behavior. Summative evaluation can become complex as we seek to determine what criteria or levels of evidence ought to be measured.

Another aspect of summative evaluation relates to inputs and activities in terms of numbers and costs to organizations. We are often concerned with examining costs in comparison to benefits. Were funds spent for intended purposes? Did a program achieve its success at a reasonable cost? Can dollar values be assigned to outcomes? Efficiency assessments, including cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness, provide a frame of reference for relating costs to program results.

We need to use caution in determining summative economic benefits. Not all benefits can be converted to monetary terms. Cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness often are viewed more conceptually than they are technically because the required technical procedures of converting benefits to dollar amounts may be beyond the expertise and resources of most evaluators. For example, an important question today is how community recreation programs can contribute to people becoming more physically active. How much is then saved in health care costs because these nonactive people are healthier? Measuring prevention outcomes is complicated, but that does not mean we should not try.

Political and moral controversies also exist about whether you can put value on some outcomes. For example, what is the value of a child's life if she or he is given swimming lessons so that someday she or he will not drown? These dilemmas about dollar figures may obscure the relevancy of evaluations if one gets too caught up in the numbers. As a form of summative evaluation, however, measuring outcomes is essential.

From Ideas to Reality

Timing can relate to all aspects of evaluation. Assessment involves getting potential baseline information about available inputs; what needs and interests people have; current involvement, attitudes and reactions; and an assessment of what knowledge, skills, aspirations, and attitudes now exist. A formative evaluation would be concerned with various aspects of process and progress as recreation services are delivered. The summative evaluation addresses outcomes or effectiveness. Clearly, the timing of evaluations will be closely linked to the reasons for conducting an evaluation project.

All aspects of timing are needed within organizations but not all programs, participants, places, policies, or personnel need to be evaluated within each timing sequence. Decisions will need to be made concerning the most appropriate timing to use for a particular evaluation system and project. Sometimes in the case of personnel, you may be doing assessments or formative and summative evaluations, whereas in other situations—such as evaluating safety procedures on a camping trip—only formative evaluation might be used.

As an evaluator, you will need to decide when and how evaluations are most appropriate and most useful to aid you in making enlightened decisions.

Now that you have studied this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Describe the differences between assessment, formative, and summative evaluations
- List some possible applications for each of the timing aspects of evaluation

1.9 Designing Evaluation and Research Projects: Doing What You Gotta Do

Data for an evaluation or research project should not be collected until a solid plan has been carefully identified and a purpose has been articulated. Once you have determined what to include in your organization's evaluation system, you can then plan a specific evaluation project or conduct necessary research. Once you know what burning questions you want to answer in your research, you can begin to design the proposal.

Planning a project includes choosing a model to guide you, determining the timing of evaluation and the area (Ps) within recreation services that you will evaluate, and then selecting specific methods to use. A research proposal requires the initiation of a literature review, the identification of the role of theory, and design and methods selections. In this chapter, we examine how to design an evaluation project as well as how to develop a research proposal. Both tasks share some commonalities, but each also is distinctive.

Sometimes the design for a project, such as a performance appraisal for staff development, is a tool that will be used over and over again. Other times, each individual evaluation or research project will be designed anew. Generally, small-scale, highly focused, and manageable studies are more useful than large, broad evaluations. Sometimes more complex projects will be necessary, and cutting a major project or study into manageable portions may be needed to complete it successfully. Regardless of the magnitude of the undertaking, keeping the evaluation or research project focused and on target is essential.

A design for evaluation or research provides a plan for allocating resources of time and energy. An evaluator always has many choices. Various constraints, however, are associated with every plan, and you must do the best you can, given the financial, time, and human resources that exist. In addition, for any evaluation or research endeavor, many designs may be proposed, but no single plan is necessarily going to be perfect. Thus, you will have to make decisions about what is likely to work best.

Developing Plans for a Specific Evaluation Project

Taking time to plan is important in any project or study. We have found planning guidelines to be a most useful framework in developing individual evaluation projects and in doing research projects. In general, when planning a project, you will be examining several basic questions:

- **Why** (for what reason or purpose is this project being done, is it worth the effort, and what use will the results have)
- **What** (which aspects of the Ps will be evaluated; what issues need to be addressed; what goals and objectives are to be evaluated, what level of evaluation will be used, and what criteria are to be measured)
- **Who** (who wants the information and in what form, who will actually conduct the evaluation, and who has the information)
- **When** (timelines and timing)
- **Where** (sample size and composition)
- **How** (procedures to collect and analyze data, methods, techniques, and ethics; how the final report with be presented; and resources, financial and time, needed)

These questions resemble what was asked in setting up an evaluation system, but in the evaluation project design you get more specific about how a project will actually be conducted from the beginning to the end. The design of the actual project is the "nitty gritty" of evaluation.

Ideally you will consider the why, what, who, when, where, and how together, but practically, each will build upon the others. Researchers and evaluators should be careful not to measure or study something that is of no interest to management, policymakers, or other researchers. Thus, the first three steps of determining why, what, and who are essential.

The *why* of doing evaluations has been discussed extensively in Chapter 1.4, but the evaluator must always keep in mind the purpose of the project in order to stay focused and on track. The why also has implications for what and who.

What relates to the model to be used and the criteria to be measured. Is it possible to measure the criteria desired? Do the resources

exist to do an appropriate evaluation or research project? Are the level of evaluation and the timing of the evaluation consistent with what the stakeholders want and need? These answers represent critical aspects in developing the evaluation plan because you need to decide whether to attempt a particular evaluation project or not.

The *who* often refers to the stakeholders or who wants the information. Stakeholders are those individuals who are personally involved in the organization (i.e., board members, colleagues), who have monetary interests in the organization (i.e., funders, stockholders), whose future status or career might be affected by the quality of the organization (i.e., staff), and/or who are the clients or potential recipients of the organization's services. Arranging a meeting of the stakeholders for a proposed evaluation project is often useful before you begin. Staff members are usually more involved in the organization than either sponsors or clients, so they need to have input about how an evaluation will be conducted. Many aspects of the evaluation plan, such as the type of evaluation, the availability of resources, and the reasons for evaluating can be determined early in the project by talking to stakeholders. For example, many funders stipulate certain kinds of evaluation data they expect to see in yearly grant reports. Further, clarifications should be made specific about why a project is being undertaken and what the project scope is.

A second part of the *who* question is to determine who has the needed information. In some cases, documents may already exist that can help to address the evaluation criteria. Existing research/evaluation literature may be used as well as organizational records. You may want to find out what has been done elsewhere if possible, and "borrow" or adapt their approach and/or instruments whenever possible and appropriate. Who also relates to the general population to be evaluated. For example, will it be parents of children who attend a program, the children, their teachers, or a combination?

A third part of *who* is to determine who will be in charge of the evaluation. Although one person may do an evaluation project, a team approach is often desirable. The more people involved in an evaluation project, the more likely they are to have ideas that can help to make the evaluation design effective and the recommendations usable when completed.

When refers to the timing and timelines. Should the evaluation be assessment, summative, or formative? If the evaluation is summative,

when is the best time to collect information: immediately or several weeks after a program? How long will the project take to complete? When are the results of the evaluation needed? When is the best time during the program or the year to do the evaluation? To some extent, these answers will depend on the criteria used. You must try to be realistic about how long a project may take to complete. Keep in mind that it takes time for proper pretesting of instruments, training of data collectors, getting related material from other books and journals, analyzing the data to draw conclusions and make recommendations, writing the report, and sharing insights with key stakeholders. Think about the unforeseen problems that might be encountered, such as an inadequate sample size, that could slow down the data collection. All of these issues will be discussed further in Unit Two, but the conscientious evaluator will consider the possible problems in the planning phase to try to prevent them from happening when the evaluation or study is actually implemented.

Where the evaluation is conducted will depend on the recreation area examined, the sample used, and the timing. The particular aspect of the five Ps will also determine the where. Usually the where question is not difficult to answer once other components of planning have been carefully considered.

The final task is to determine *how* to do a project. How relates primarily to data collection and analysis. Such decisions include sampling, research design, data collection administration, choice of statistics, and how the findings will be reported and shared. Once the preceding questions are answered, these how questions will likely fall into place, although decisions about how will still need to be made as you plan. The problem with some evaluations is that people decide they are going to use a particular technique, like mailed or online questionnaires, before determining any of the other aspects of the evaluation project plan's design.

The *how* aspect of the plan, however, has to be realistic, because you must also assess the resources available for the project. The evaluator must be careful to avoid data addiction. That is, you should plan to collect only the data that are needed, not everything that would be interesting to ask. If criteria are appropriately delimited, data addiction should not be a problem.

Further, the *how* may also include considering costs such as the following:

- Staff time for planning
- Labor and material costs for pilot testing
- Hard copy and software/computing costs
- Supervisory costs for interviewer hiring and training as well as supervising staff or volunteers
- Labor and expense of data administration and entry (including transcription costs if collecting qualitative data during interviews or focus groups)
- Labor time and material costs for analysis and report preparation
- Telephone charges, postage, and printing

A good evaluation is not always inexpensive, and some projects are more economical than others. The costs will obviously increase with the complexity of the project and analyses needed.

After these why, what, who, when, where, and how decisions are considered, a brief proposal or written plan will be useful to make sure that all people involved in your organization agree with what will be done in the evaluation project. Sometimes when you see things written down on paper, possible mistakes or problems are easier to spot. The following planning framework outline (Table 1.9) is offered as an example and a model that can be used in doing small-scale evaluation project planning.

Several other items might be considered when designing an evaluation project. First, baseline data about a program, participant, staff member, or place may be needed before the data collection begins. You may want to know the state of affairs that existed up to the present time. This information might provide a standard of comparison for measuring the outcomes.

Second, evaluators also need to be aware of their agendas and biases as well as those of the stakeholders or audience. Possible conflicts should be discussed ahead of time and negotiated. The goals of the project should be agreed upon and the possibility of unexpected consequences, such as what happens if undesirable effects are found, should be anticipated. All parties in the evaluation should be aware of how the evaluation is to be conducted and how the data will be presented.

Table 1.9

Evaluation Project Planning Framework Example (adapted from the work of students: Ginna Millard, Sara Shope, and Amy Bryan)

Agency: University of North Carolina Hospitals (Pediatric Play Room)

Why?
> *Background:* Problems exist trying to keep track of the toys, videos, and other resources that are available to use and check out in the Pediatric Play Room.
>
> *Purpose:* To describe the process (success and failures) in the present system, set a baseline, and to provide for organizational improvement in the future.
>
> *Cost-effectiveness:* The administration of the project can be done by volunteer undergraduate students who will provide a report to the CTRS responsible for the play room.

What?
> *Model:* Goal-free.
>
> *Criteria:* What are the problems, what policies currently exist, how are they enforced, how willing are staff and volunteers to enforce policies.
>
> *Data Type:* A combination of qualitative (field observations) and quantitative data (questionnaires to staff and volunteers who supervise the play room)

Who?
> *Who Wants the Information:* Director of Therapeutic Recreation Services at UNC Hospitals and CTRS in charge of play room.
>
> *Who Will Do the Project:* Undergraduate TR students in an evaluation class.
>
> *Who Will Provide Data:* The evaluators will observe the play room and survey all individuals who have responsibilities for supervising the play room.

When?
> *Timing:* Formative evaluation.
>
> *Timelines:* March (observation) and April (surveys and analysis) 1994.

Where?
> *Sample Size and Composition:* Random sample of observations during various hours that the play room is open; a population sample will be done of supervisors in the play room.

How?
> *Method(s) to Use:* Field observations and quantitative questionnaires.
>
> *Time and Money Resources Needed:* Time to plan, conduct, and write report is volunteer time from students; supplies for printing from hospital budget = $10; computer analysis free.
>
> *Special Considerations:* Gaining cooperation of supervisors in the play room.

(Note: More detail will be added to each of these as the specific plans for data collection are solidified.)

Third, an evaluation that works in one situation may not be appropriate for another. "Borrowing" evaluation instruments that other agencies have used may be a good idea, but they should not be used wholesale without considering the specific context of your organization. You can use someone else's evaluation as a starting point, but make sure that it addresses the criteria that you have determined and that the instrument is aimed at the same level of evaluation that you wish to address. An instrument that is used, for example, to get reactions to a program may be helpful but not if you are interested in skill changes.

Finally, usefulness for thoughtful decision making is the primary focus of evaluations. For an evaluation project to be useful, criteria must be addressed to answer questions for decision makers. Avoid questions that decision makers do not want answered. Avoid questions that already have known answers. If the problem is a disorganized organization, one should organize it rather than try to evaluate it. Unless a lack of knowledge and information is a part of the disorganization problem, evaluation research will not help. Evaluations take a commitment of time and resources and often have limitations. They must be designed to provide the greatest potential to get useful information for making the best possible decisions.

Developing a Research Proposal

Many of the principles that apply to designing an evaluation project plan also pertain to writing a research proposal. Procedures used should result in adding to the body of knowledge. The research proposal should include as much detail as possible. This plan is necessary to clarify thinking and give focus and direction to the research. The value of a research plan or proposal, just like the evaluation plan, is to state your ideas so that others might react to them and improve upon them. Planning may prevent serious problems in implementing a study.

Most research proposals (including many grant proposals) include the following sections:

- Introduction
- Statement of the theory and hypotheses
- Initial review of the literature
- Description of proposed sample

- Methods and techniques to use in carrying out the study
- Plans for how data analysis will be done.

The *general introduction* identifies the area to be studied and how it will contribute to the body of knowledge that already exists. The need for the study and the statement of the problem addressed is generally included in this introduction.

The *statement of the theory and/or hypotheses* gives a framework for the study. This framework tells the reader what is being addressed and the possible questions or relationships that will be examined. Theory is the foundation for any research undertaken. For studies that focus on generating new theory, the guiding research questions serve as the framework for this part of the research design.

In a research proposal, an initial *review of literature* should be described. More may be added to the literature review as the study is undertaken, but the researcher needs to determine what literature (i.e., scientific journal articles, reports of past studies) currently exists and what methods have been employed to address these topics in the past. The most important and recent literature is usually included in this brief review.

The researcher will also want to identify the *sample* to be used and how it will be selected. This description will include the characteristics of participants in the study as well as the number of participants that are needed. Sampling procedures and rationale should be determined as well as the source of the data to be collected. Prior to writing the sampling section of your report, you must make sure you will have access to the sample you wish to use.

The *methods and techniques* for data collection in carrying out the project will need to be identified. This aspect is also referred to as the research design. The methods and techniques should be consistent with the theory or hypotheses used. The way you collect your data as well as sample selection are major considerations to your ability to generalize the results from your study to a much larger yet similar population. This section may also contain information on how the rights of your research subjects will be protected.

Related to the procedures of data collection is a plan for *data analysis*. The analysis may influence the number of participants needed as well as the way the instruments are used or designed. The

analysis must also result in being able to answer the hypotheses and research questions that are generated.

A research proposal is generally longer than an evaluation plan, but both are critical to designing studies that will address the questions that need to be answered for decision making or for contributing to the body of knowledge in a field such as recreation services.

From Ideas to Reality

Planning evaluation projects and research studies beyond the idea stage is often not the most exciting endeavor for some people. Many times it is more fun to actually begin collecting data. Some evaluators and researchers, particularly when they are novices, have a tendency to want to begin to collect data and later work out the "bugs" of a study. We encourage you to consider drafting an outline for each phase of your evaluation or research study before you begin to collect data. It will set a course for you that can provide direction as you move through the undertaking. As you can see by the examples given in this chapter, the plan or proposal does not need to be elaborate at this stage, but it at least can give you a path to follow. It may be modified slightly as the project or study develops, but a good plan provides a foundation upon which to build.

Now that you have studied this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Write an evaluation project plan including the why, who, what, when, where, and how
- Describe the elements that are part of a research proposal. How are they alike or different from the evaluation project design?
- Determine the considerations that should be made in planning any type of evaluation or research project
- Analyze whether an evaluation plan or research study is feasible and has the potential for producing usable results

1.10 To Be or Not to Be:

Competencies and the Art of Systematic Inquiry

Most recreation professionals are pretty good intuitive evaluators. However, education, training, and practical experience are necessary to become confident and competent at conducting formal evaluation effectively over time. "The art of systematic inquiry" refers to skills and competencies necessary for a person to use evaluation to address needs, solve problems, and identify solutions within an organization. As indicated in the preface, reading this book will not automatically make you an expert evaluator or a skilled researcher. That learning will take years of experience. You do, however, need to have some basic skills and background to conduct and evaluate your own projects and, with practice, become a systematic inquirer.

A critical aspect of learning is that when one acquires knowledge about a few things, one often finds out about all the things that one doesn't know. We have learned as professors that sometimes the value of a college education is not in what you learn, but how a person comes to appreciate what she or he doesn't know. We are all lifelong learners, and getting good at evaluation or research requires continually learning new skills. For example, when the first edition of this book was published, no one had ever heard of Internet surveys. Now, as you will see later in this book, they are a common means of collecting data. Thus, one important aspect of developing competencies for evaluation in recreation is to learn the limitations of your own skills, as well as the limitations of what evaluation can do for an organization. It also means keeping up on what is "new" related to evaluation and research.

Sometimes understanding how to judge the merits of evaluations or to critique research is just as important as being able to actually conduct studies. Some organizations rely on external evaluators or consultants who come from outside the organization to conduct evaluations. Other organizations use only internal evaluators who are professionals within the organization whose job responsibilities include evaluation. Whether you are actually the internal professional who conducts the evaluation or the scholar who does the research,

or whether you use the information obtained from an external evaluator or read research articles, you still need to know the terminology and the components that must be considered in a process of systematic inquiry.

Internal Versus External Evaluations

The ideal situation for an organization is to have both internal and external evaluations conducted appropriately within the evaluation system. The decision whether to use internal or external evaluators may depend on a variety of factors.

There are many advantages to using internal evaluators. The professional who is an employee in the organization ought to know a lot about the organization. Less time will be needed for the evaluator to become familiar with the ins and outs and the intricacies of the organization. An internal evaluator will also be more accessible to colleagues and will likely not be as obtrusive as an external evaluator. Once the evaluation is complete, the internal evaluator may be in a better position to make changes and to use the results of the evaluation for decision making. When internal evaluators are used, they receive their regular salary, so the costs would likely be lower. Further, because the internal evaluator knows the organization, realistic recommendations that can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization might be more easily offered.

Obvious advantages also exist to using an external evaluator. These consultants may have more objectivity due to the distance they have from the situation and the freedom from responsibility for the organization or the services. Their objectivity is also based on a professional commitment to the field and not the individual organization. Further, they have credibility due to their professional experience and competency. With more experience, they may have access to a greater variety of methods and techniques. They may also know more about how other organizations address some of their evaluation concerns and may be better able to assist in benchmarking. Consultants may have resources, such as sample measurement instruments or computer programs for data analysis. These resources may not be available to internal evaluators in an organization. Since external evaluators have less investment in a program, they may feel

less pressure to make compromises in their recommendations. In addition, if staff conflicts are a problem in an organization, outside evaluators might be able to mediate them better than someone who is involved within the organization. External objectivity will likely be unencumbered by knowledge of personal issues and conflicts. A further advantage is that they may have data from other organizations that would make for comparative evaluations.

A downside exists to using only internal or only external evaluators. The internal evaluator may feel pressure to have positive results. Her or his job, or the jobs of colleagues, may be on the line if evaluations are not good. It is generally easier for an internal evaluator to focus on strengths rather than weaknesses. An internal evaluator may find difficulty in criticizing certain aspects of a program. Further, an internal evaluator who does not have extensive training in evaluation might not be as competent as someone who specializes in evaluation.

An external evaluator might also have disadvantages. This outside individual can be seen as a threat to employees. Employees might be on their best behavior, and the organization might not appear as it really is. The external evaluator must spend a great deal of time just getting to know an organization and can miss some of the nuances that go on within a particular organization on a day-to-day basis. The outside evaluator might take valuable time away from staff or might disrupt the normal functioning of an organization. As is true in any situation, the external evaluator might impose her or his value system on an organization that might not hold the same values. Further, hiring an external evaluator can be expensive, and many recreation agencies do not have those financial resources.

Decisions will have to be made about who is the best person to conduct an evaluation. Some decisions are obvious. For example, one's immediate supervisor usually conducts personnel evaluations, and bringing someone from the outside does not usually make sense. On the other hand, when standards are applied through an accreditation process, external reviewers are required. Some programs may be evaluated easily "in-house," whereas hiring someone to conduct a more thorough evaluation may be useful in some instances. Table 1.10 provides a summary of these advantages and disadvantages of internal and external evaluators.

We would hope that all recreation professionals would be good internal evaluators and would also possess skills to be external evaluators, too. The development of these skills, however, takes education and practice. Just as important is knowing when you see a well-done evaluation that is useful to an individual or an organization.

Table 1.10

Advantages and Disadvantages of External and Internal Evaluators

Internal

Advantages	Disadvantages
Knows the Organization	Pressure to Have Positive Results
Accessible to Colleagues	Difficult to Criticize
Realistic Recommendations	May Lack Training
Can Make Changes	

External

Advantages	Disadvantages
More Objectivity	Threat to Employees
Competence	Must Get to Know Organization
Experience	May Disrupt Organization
More Resources	May Impose Values
Less Pressure to Compromise	Expensive
Lower Costs	

Developing Competencies

Regardless of who conducts the evaluation or research project, every recreation professional should have some usable training in systematic evaluation. The more individuals who have evaluation and research training in an organization, the better off the organization will be. Even if an external evaluator is hired, the professionals in the organization must know how to formulate criteria for the project and will need to determine the reliability and validity of the judgments made by external evaluators.

In using an internal or external reviewer or conducting a research project, several specific competencies ought to be required:

1. The individual conducting the evaluation or research should have some knowledge about the topical area to be evaluated. If the adult sports league is to be evaluated, for example, the evaluator should know something about recreation programming for adults and about sports programming. In addition, the basic terminology of evaluation should be understood.

2. An evaluator ought to know something about designing evaluation systems, developing planning frameworks for individual projects, and writing goals and objectives. Knowing why and what to evaluate are necessary prerequisites for writing different types of objectives. The evaluator must be able to judge how measurement can be conducted in relation to these goals and objectives.

3. An individual should know all the possible evaluation and research methods from which to choose. He or she should know how to determine the best way to collect data, how to choose a sample, how to choose appropriate instruments that will result in accurate information, and the appropriate techniques for analysis.

4. The evaluator or researcher should be able to interpret the data and relate those results to the criteria. An understanding of the trilogy of evaluation and how the parts fit together is essential.

5. An evaluator or researcher should know what to look for in analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data using the most appropriate strategies or statistics. As you will see later, professionals may be partial to qualitative or quantitative data. These preferences, however, do not preclude knowing the basic assumptions about each type of data and appropriate analyses so that sound evaluative judgments can be made.

6. An evaluator must understand how to use evaluation results in decision making, regardless of which Ps are evaluated. This competency will involve knowing how to organize, write, and present reports so that the information can be communicated effectively to those individuals (e.g., staff, board or commission members, parents) who want and/or need the information.

7. An evaluator or researcher needs to be able to address the political, legal, moral, and ethical issues that may be encountered in doing an evaluation. Certain legal and ethical concerns must be addressed, as well as how evaluators can be politically responsive

to those users of the evaluation information. More detail will be given about these issues in the next chapter.

8. Although most of the above competencies relate to conceptual and technical skills, certain personal skills are an additional aspect needed to be a successful evaluator or researcher. Personal qualities include an interest in improving programs, places, policies, participant experiences, and/or personnel. The evaluator must be worthy of the trust of her or his colleagues as well as of the administrators and the decision makers of organizations. She or he must be as objective as possible, although one's personal biases cannot help but enter into any undertaking. The effective evaluator must be able to see and respond to sensitive issues and situations as they relate to the uniqueness of organizations. The effective systematic inquirer must possess good "people" skills and preferably strong communication abilities.

When you begin to assess the competencies needed to conduct evaluation or research projects, they may appear to be a bit daunting. These competencies are not that rigorous, though, if you see evaluation and research as a system of linking criteria, evidence, and judgment. Conducting these projects or examining evaluation information should not be feared. The best way to learn is to "just do it" and the only way to get started is to begin and to start with appropriate criteria. Some aspects of evaluation are technical but not so difficult that they can't be used by an enthusiastic and committed recreation professional.

From Ideas to Reality

To become a good evaluator or researcher requires a combination of education, training, and practical experience. All recreation professionals should have a basic background in methods that will enable them to do projects and judge the merit of projects done by others. No magic formulas exist to teach how to be a competent evaluator or researcher, but by learning the basics and trying them out, evaluating your own work, and practicing, you can become effective and successful. You will also know if others have displayed the competencies needed to do reliable, valid, and useful projects.

Whether to use internal or external evaluations is a decision left up to an organization. Both have advantages and disadvantages. Many times, organizations do not have the funding necessary to hire outside consultants, so they rely on internal evaluators. It is better to go outside the organization for some types of criteria that need to be measured. The professional will need to determine when it is most appropriate to do internal or external evaluations and how that relates to the entire evaluation system.

Now that you have studied this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Describe the advantages and disadvantages of using internal versus external evaluators
- Determine when it is best to hire an outside evaluator or use an internal evaluator
- Describe the competencies needed to be a good evaluator or researcher