EVALUATION FOR DECISION IN HUMAN SERVICE PROGRAMS

by

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ABSTRACT

The fundamental purpose of program evaluation is to gather information that will increase the rationality of decisionmaking. Yet there is ample evidence in the literature that evaluation findings are often ignored by decisionmakers. Why? Some suggest that evaluations are not providing relevant information to decisionmakers and that the manner in which evaluation is being carried out is discouraging the use of evaluation results.

Practitioners in the field of evaluation have long recognized this problem of non-utilization. But attempts to correct the problem have in large measure focused on the final stage of the evaluation effort - the dissemination of results. A major premise of this thesis is that utility (as perceived by decisionmakers) must be built into each and every stage in the evaluation. It addresses the question, "How can evaluation be designed and implemented, and its findings disseminated in a way that will make it more utilitarian to decisionmakers?"

The author identifies twenty-five concepts or 'Utility Principles' which hold promise to improve the usefulness of results to decisionmakers. To illustrate how these principles might be applied in a social action setting, a utility-focused
evaluation model is designed for the Community Service Order Program of the British Columbia Corrections Branch. Finally, the limitations and opportunities of a utility-focused approach to evaluation are examined.
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TO RANDI

friend, confidante and
enduring martyr

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation for Decisionmaking

Now, more than ever before, an atmosphere of economic restraint is forcing government agencies to cut costs and improve the effectiveness of their programs. Agency performance is being carefully scrutinized by the public exchequer and administrators are having to justify the cost-effectiveness of their operations with facts and figures. Gloomy economic predictions suggest this trend toward 'no frills', hard-won budgets will continue.

The plethora of literature on evaluation suggest that public agencies are responding to these 'hard times' by allocating more and more human and monetary resources to the development and implementation of program evaluation. Indeed, program evaluation units are now commonly found throughout federal and provincial governments.

But as impressive as the growth of evaluation appears, its track record has been more than a little disappointing. It is now widely accepted that evaluation has had little to no impact on public sector program decisionmaking. States Weiss:\(^1\)

if we take a clear, cold look at just how useful and cost-effective program evaluation has been for improving service programs and delivery systems, we find that the
record is hardly spectacular. Just as most human service programs have had indifferent success in improving the lot of clients, most program evaluations have had little impact on improving the quality of programs. Despite our high-flown rhetoric, evaluators share with program colleagues both the self-serving nature of the justification for our enterprise and the spotty record of success.

Evaluation results, it seems are being disregarded by decision-makers. Why?

Admittedly, part of the reason for evaluation's poor showing can be attributed to the purely methodological difficulties inherent in assessing people programs. But it is becoming increasingly evident that the underutilization of evaluation reports is largely a failure on the part of those developing and implementing evaluation to produce results that are relevant to the wants and needs of decisionmakers (Decisionmakers may be any individuals or groups who make decisions which affect the delivery of program services. They may be a funding body, policymakers, managers, service providers, service recipients, a citizen group or any combination of these. However, the term is being used in this study to refer to those for whom the evaluation has been specifically commissioned - the primary users of evaluation results). Thompson concludes that the failure of evaluation has resulted from the false but widely accepted belief that evaluations that are highly valid are highly utilitarian:

Evaluations - however sound their methodologies and however skilled their researchers - do not automatically benefit decisions. This single, simple oversight explains much of the disappointing record of evaluation. Only when evaluations are commissioned in such a way that the researchers have incentives and direction guiding
them to collect the information required for decisions can we be confident that they will benefit policy. The message is clear. The fundamental purpose for evaluation in the context of the social action program must be to serve the information needs of decisionmakers (the author recognizes, however, that there may be other, secondary 'purposes' for evaluation - see Chapter VI). Suchman concurs:

an evaluation study should be a problem-solving enterprise with a clear-cut relationship to some decision-making function. Perhaps the most crucial question to be asked before an evaluation is undertaken is, "What decisions about the program or its objectives will be affected by the results of the evaluation?"

In a similar vein, Weiss writes

The basic rationale for evaluation is that it provides information for action. Its primary justification is that it contributes to the rationalization of decision-making. Although it can serve such other functions as knowledge-building and theory-testing, unless it gains serious hearing when program decisions are made, it fails in its major purpose.

Results are more likely to influence program decisions, then, when the evaluation addresses the needs of decisionmakers.

The task of making results useful involves more than simply arranging the data in a certain way or using a particular format for the report. Useful results are inextricably linked to the evaluation plan, the manner in which it is carried out and the way in which finding are presented (see Chapter II).

Therein lies the thesis of this study:

If there is to be reasonable assurance that evaluation will produce results that are useful and used, the information needs of decisionmakers must be addressed at each and every stage in the evaluation effort. That is, every major decision involved in the planning of the evaluation, in its implementation and in the dissemination of results must address the question "will this action increase the likelihood that the findings will be relevant to and utilized by decisionmakers?"
It is this premise, that utility must be built into the evaluation effort from start to finish, that shapes the approach taken in this study ('utility' is defined as a state of usefulness; what is useful is relative to the perceiver).

**Study Focus**

This thesis is a response to the need for more useful program evaluation. Its purpose is two-fold:

1. To identify a set of 'Utility Principles', ('Utility Principle' is a term coined by the author. It refers to a fundamental state or characteristic of evaluation that is likely to contribute to the generation of findings that are useful to program decisionmakers) which when applied to the development and implementation of an evaluation model will significantly increase the probability that the evaluation will influence program decisionmaking.

2. To demonstrate how some of the Utility Principles could be applied by developing a utility-focused evaluation model for a public sector social action program (the terms 'utility-focused evaluation' and 'utility model' are synonymous and refer to evaluation that is designed and carried out in a manner that promotes the usefulness of evaluation results to decision-makers and which incorporates some or all of the utility principles developed in this study).

First the study draws together suggestions for improving utility from several sources (see Thesis Methodology, this chapter).
The aim is to consolidate these 'bits' of theory into a set of guidelines (Utility Principles) that the reader can then use as a basis for creating a utility-focused evaluation model to fit the context of his particular program/agency.

However, the principles espoused are not intended to define a written-in-stone formula for achieving more useful evaluation. They are offered only as a conceptual framework from which decisionmakers and evaluators are invited to choose that which fits their unique needs and circumstances. Some of the principles raised may not be acceptable to some decisionmakers or may not be possible to implement in some contexts. Indeed, one can conceive of an evaluation that incorporates none of the principles developed in this thesis that is nevertheless highly utilitarian to a particular decisionmaker (although this would not be utility-focused evaluation as defined in this study). In the final analysis, utility is relative to the beholder; each decisionmaker will have his own view of what will make evaluation a useful tool for him.

Equipped with a set of Utility Principles the author turns to examine a particular public sector agency. The purposes of doing so are (1) to help the reader consolidate the theory of utility-focused evaluation and conceptualize its practice, (2) to demonstrate the sort of utility-oriented reasoning essential to those planning and undertaking program evaluation, and (3) to isolate the limitations and opportunities related to the application of the Utility Principles. In short, the case study attempts to bridge the gap between utility theory and
practice and to explore the boundaries of usefulness of the utility concepts proposed.

The setting for the case study is the Community Service Order Program, operated by the British Columbia Corrections Branch, Ministry of the Attorney-General. In particular, the case study focuses on the Vancouver Region of that agency.

To achieve the purposes of the case study and within the setting described, the author develops a utility-focused evaluation model. Incorporated in the model are many of the principles identified earlier in the thesis. It is worth emphasizing that the objective is not to create an operational evaluation model; the intent is solely to use the model development process to accomplish the three purposes identified above.

Whenever it seems pertinent to the study purpose the discussion moves outside the boundaries of the Vancouver Region administration to consider relationships with other parts of the Branch and with other components of the Criminal Justice System. (The term 'Criminal Justice System' refers in this study, to all those agencies involved in the administration of criminal justice, notably the police, crown prosecutor, courts and the British Columbia Corrections Branch. It implies that these component agencies are interdependent and that they collectively function as a whole).

**Evaluation - A Definition**

Definitions of evaluation, and consequently evaluations themselves, have long been dominated by the thinking that evaluation necessarily means measuring program outcomes in relation
to specified goals. Suchman's view of evaluation is characteristic of this goal orientation. He suggests that

The key elements in...a...definition of evaluation are: (1) an objective or goal which is considered desirable or has some positive value; (2) a planned program of deliberate intervention which one hypothesizes is capable of achieving the desired goal; and (3) a method for determining the degree to which the desired objective is attained as a result of the planned program.

These "key elements" lead Suchman to propose this definition of evaluation:

the determination...of the results...attained by some activity...designed to accomplish some valued goal or objective...

Assuming Suchman is using the terms goal and objective in reference to a final desired state (rather than intermediate objectives), his definition must be deemed inadequate for a utility-focused approach to evaluation. First, it is oriented to the collection of outcome data which may be irrelevant to decisionmakers' needs (they may only want information about program processes). Second, there is no indication from the definition whose values and information needs are being served and, therefore, no guidance as to what data should be collected. Lichfield et al. overcome the first deficiency by excluding any reference to outcomes or goals. Evaluation, they state, is

the process of analyzing a number of plans or projects with a view to searching out their comparative advantages and disadvantages and the act of setting down the findings of such analyses in a logical framework. The essence of evaluation is the assessment of the comparative merits of different courses of action.

Yet Lichfield et al. make no mention of what to many is evaluation's fundamental purpose, to service decisionmaking. Riecken's definition hints at the importance of addressing decisionmaker
needs but remains entrenched in the unnecessarily confining 'goal-orientation' model:

Evaluation is the measurement of desirable and undesirable consequences of an action, intended to forward some goal that the actor values.

The definition adopted for this study is that proposed by Alkin. It is broad enough to be applicable to any information needs decisionmakers may have and explicitly states evaluation's fundamental purpose - to aid decisionmaking:

Evaluation is the process of ascertaining the decision areas of concern, selecting appropriate information, and collecting and analyzing information in order to report summary data useful to decisionmakers in selecting among alternatives.

'Evaluation' is only used in this study in reference to public sector social action programs.

**Thesis Methodology**

The approach to this thesis involves three basic steps:

1. the literature on evaluation research is examined to identify a set of principles to guide the development of a utility-focused evaluation model, 
2. the case study context is ascertained (the B.C. Corrections Branch and the Community Service Order Program) and 
3. selected Utility Principles are applied to the study context to shape the evaluation model.

The number of Utility Principles that one could propose for evaluation seems almost infinite. Indeed, every act in the evaluation effort could conceivably have such a principle attached to it. It was necessary, therefore, to select a manageable number of key principles. The principles proposed in the thesis
are those which (1) are likely to have a significant impact on evaluation's usefulness, (2) appear to have general support in the literature, (3) as a set, form a consistent whole, reflecting a cohesive theory of utility-focused evaluation, (4) as a set, provide guidance for the would-be evaluator at each and every step in the evaluation effort.

The reader will note that not all the Utility Principles put forward in Chapter II are explicitly applied to the study context. The reason is that some of the principles refer to states of mind or human attributes (e.g. Principle 5: Decision-makers must (1) want and need information, (2) care about and be willing to share responsibility for the evaluation, (3) have the skills to use the information effectively") that could not be determined without surveying the individuals involved. Time constraints did not permit such a survey. Consequently, only those principles that lend themselves to illustration without imput from practitioners in the agency examined are used to develop the model. To make the model truly utilitarian, input from relevant decisionmakers would, of course, be necessary.

Principles, by nature, must be general enough to be of wide application. Applying the principles to the case study, therefore, requires the author to identify the specific form each principle should take having considered the constraints and opportunities presented by the program/agency environment. This translation of principle into practice is guided by the following three questions: (1) Has the agency the time and resources (human and material) to incorporate this principle
in this form? (2) Will this principle, when applied to this context, require the organization to make significant changes to its present mode of operation? (3) Does this operational form of the principle add the most to the utilization potential of the evaluation relative to other alternatives?

Information for the thesis is obtained from four sources: (1) literature on evaluation research, (2) B.C. Corrections Branch documents, (3) B.C. Corrections Branch personnel, (4) author's personal knowledge of and experience in the B.C. Corrections Branch. From the literature come the problem statement and theme of the study (evaluation for decisionmaking), a definition of evaluation, concepts for most of the Utility Principles developed in Chapter II and conceptual frameworks for developing the structural elements of the model in Chapter V. Branch documents, together with discussions with Branch personnel provide the descriptive data needed for Chapter III (the setting) and Chapter IV (the program). It is these two sources as well which help to reveal the contextual considerations involved in applying the Utility Principles to the case study.

For seven of the last eight year (1972 to 1980) the author has been employed as a Probation Officer for the B.C. Corrections Branch. Part of that time has been served in the Vancouver Region, specifically Squamish and Powell River. Although it is difficult to express exactly how and where this experience has been applied to the thesis there is little doubt that it has contributed significantly to the author's understanding of (1) the dynamics of the organization, (2) the constraints and opportunities facing the organization, (3) the level of management and evaluation expertise in the organization,
(4) the relationship between the Branch and other components of the Criminal Justice System. Integrated with other information sources, the author's experience is drawn upon throughout the thesis.

Format

The remainder of this thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter II develops a set of twenty-five Utility Principles, some of which are explicitly applied in the case study. Chapters III and IV describe the case study context. They provide the unfamiliarized reader with background information about the British Columbia Corrections Branch and the Community Service Order Program. Based on a number of the guidelines proposed in Chapter II, Chapter V develops a utility-focused evaluation model for the Community Service Order Program. In the final chapter suggestions are made about where utility-focused evaluation can best be used and the practicability of the approach is assessed.
CHAPTER II

PRINCIPLES OF UTILITY-FOCUSED EVALUATION

This chapter is based on the premise that there are some fundamental guidelines for evaluation that will enhance the potential usefulness of the results to decisionmakers. The purpose of this chapter is to identify those 'Principles of Utility.' Taken largely from the literature, twenty-five principles are proposed which relate to the three basic stages of evaluation - planning, implementation and dissemination of results. Collectively, the principles are related to the structural elements of evaluation (why evaluate, evaluation for and by whom, and what to evaluate) and to the process or 'how' of evaluation. Each section deals with both evaluation structure and process.

Clarifying the Purpose

Often, evaluations fail to produce meaningful results because inadequate attention is paid to developing a clear statement of purpose at the inception of the evaluation. Where ambiguity exists about why the evaluation is being done, conflict, wasted effort and irrelevant findings result. Gurel

1
is emphatic on the subject:

I have been impressed often enough and strongly enough by the problem of unclarified and dissimilar motivations that I accord it unquestioned first place among the possible reasons so much evaluation effort comes to naught.

Some motivations to evaluate take the form of 'hidden agendas' that can undermine the evaluation effort. Suchman identifies six 'abuses' of evaluation that reduce or eliminate the utility of results for program decisionmaking: (1) eye-wash - limitation of attention to favourable program aspects, (2) white-wash - avoidance of objective appraisals, (3) submarine - evaluation designed to eliminate a program, (4) posture - evaluating to appear scientific and professional, (5) postponement - using evaluation as a delay tactic, (6) substitution - disguising program failures by focusing attention on less relevant but defensible program aspects. The problems of dissimilar and illegitimate motivations for evaluation would seem less likely to occur if evaluator and decisionmakers worked together to develop a clear, specific statement of the evaluation's purpose.

PRINCIPLE OF UTILITY

PRINCIPLE 1: DECISIONMAKERS AND EVALUATOR SHOULD JOINTLY DEVELOP A CLEAR, SPECIFIC STATEMENT OF THE EVALUATION'S PURPOSE.

Identifying and Organizing the Actors

Traditionally, the evaluator has functioned independently of management, assuming full responsibility for all
aspects of planning and undertaking the evaluation. Presumably, the belief is that decisions surrounding evaluation are best left to the expertise of the evaluator and that excessive interaction with management might jeopardize the objectivity of the evaluator. Some authors now believe that the evaluator's isolation from management has been responsible for much of evaluation's poor performance, suggesting that the utility of evaluation may depend in large measure on the active participation of decisionmakers. Rutman comments:

> There is growing recognition that findings are more likely to be utilized if key decision makers are involved in the planning of the study, in discussing the findings, and in considering how the results of the research can be used to improve their programs.⁴

Patton agrees and suggests that key decisionmakers must be identified from the outset. Key decisionmakers he defines as those who have the most critical information needs about the program. He argues further that decisionmakers should be chosen who are personally disposed to evaluation. They should be "1. People who can use information; 2. People to whom information makes a difference; 3. People who have questions they want to have answered; and 4. People who care about and are willing to share responsibility for the evaluation and its utilization."⁵ Another human factor is raised by Weiss⁶ who suggests that evaluation findings might not be used if decisionmakers lack confidence in the evaluator's knowledge and abilities.

Attkisson et al. point out that decisionmakers, once armed with useful information, often lack the skills to utilize
the information effectively. Typically, they observe, human service managers were once service providers who have come up through the ranks and who lack formal training as administrators. They speculate that such administrators "tend to rely on their own observations as the information base for decision-making. They tend not to be familiar with other sources of information, and therefore to underutilize them." The implication is that when managers are the recipients of evaluation findings, they are more likely to utilize findings (and utilize them effectively) if they are skilled in evaluation, planning and management.

Choice of evaluator should be made with utility in mind. There is a long-standing debate over the merits of in-house versus external evaluators. Outsiders are generally regarded as having greater objectivity, presumably due to their wider perspective and relatively autonomous position. Insiders, on the other hand, are likely to be far more cognizant of the study context and of the issues facing the program. Then too, they are probably in a better position to facilitate the utilization of results. Adams expresses a bias toward the insider noting that

they seem to be performing the best agency evaluations that have been accomplished in recent years; and second, they appear unusually suited to increase the utilization rate of productive research.... "Moonlighting researchers from college campuses do not provide the continuity, the identification, the communications ability, nor the accumulated experience that is beginning to show up in the superior performance of some in-house units."
PRINCIPLES OF UTILITY

PRINCIPLE 2: THOSE FOR WHOM THE EVALUATION IS FOCUSED SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED FROM THE OUTSET, THEIR INFORMATION NEEDS ASCERTAINED AND THEIR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION SECURED.

PRINCIPLE 3: THE EVALUATOR SHOULD INTERACT WITH DECISIONMAKERS THROUGHOUT THE EVALUATION TO JOINTLY MAKE DECISIONS CONCERNING THE EVALUATION PLAN, ITS IMPLEMENTATION AND THE UTILIZATION OF RESULTS.

PRINCIPLE 4: DECISIONMAKERS FOR WHOM THE EVALUATION IS FOCUSED SHOULD BE THOSE WITH THE MOST CRITICAL INFORMATION NEEDS CONCERNING THE PROGRAM.

PRINCIPLE 5: DECISIONMAKERS FOR WHOM THE EVALUATION IS FOCUSED SHOULD POSSESS CERTAIN PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS. THEY SHOULD (1) WANT AND NEED INFORMATION, (2) CARE ABOUT AND BE WILLING TO SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EVALUATION AND ITS UTILIZATION, (3) POSSESS THE PERSONAL SKILLS AND INFLUENCE TO USE THE INFORMATION EFFECTIVELY.

PRINCIPLE 6: IN GENERAL, IN-HOUSE EVALUATORS SHOULD BE PREFERRED OVER EXTERNAL EVALUATORS.

Formulating the Evaluation Question

One could safely surmise that although there are countless program aspects upon which an evaluation could focus, there exists only one focus which will provide the most useful information given time and resource constraints. The onerous task facing those planning the evaluation is to uncover that optimal focus. Below, a number of authors raise suggestions as to how that might be done.

Thompson makes the obvious but oft' ignored recommendation "that the policy maker have clearly in mind the decisions for which he is commissioning the evaluation. The evaluation should gather that information set that would best guide the
decision."\textsuperscript{10} Patton\textsuperscript{11} adds that the decisionmaker, having chosen a focus, should be able to say how he would use the information obtained. Others\textsuperscript{12} have noted that it must be possible to collect the desired data given the time and resource constraints of the agency. Thompson observes that evaluations which attempt to examine a broad range of program aspects typically do not produce highly useful information. 'Diffuse' evaluations, he states, require a high degree of expertise to be done properly. To improve the utility of evaluation Thompson urges that more emphasis should be placed on the 'specific' evaluation (defined as a"limited and directed assignment to provide specific information to the commissioner"). The warning here, of course, is that evaluations should not be so specific that understanding of the phenomenon studied is impaired or that false conclusions are reached. Furthermore, researchers have an obligation to watch for unanticipated events and should not hesitate to alter the evaluation focus (with decisionmaker agreement) if more useful information would result. It must also be possible and desirable to take action on evaluation findings.\textsuperscript{14} Where potential findings suggest action that is politically, morally or economically unacceptable the evaluation may be of limited usefulness (although sometimes the most important issues will be those that are contentious). Chommie and Hudson stress the importance of choosing a focus which will provide a direction for action and suggest, in this regard,
that more attention be given to program process. Information about outcomes alone, they note, does not tell decisionmakers how or where to make program improvements or to what program successes can be attributed ('outcomes' is used only in reference to final program outcomes as opposed to outcomes associated with intermediate means-end relationships):

Clearly, both process and outcome are proper concerns for evaluation. The authors contend, however, that giving increased attention to process rather than focusing strictly on outcome, may have significant informational payoff to the various people involved in social programs and, in turn, may lead to a clearer understanding of how and why change does or does not occur.\(^{15}\)

Patton observes that many evaluations, by focusing on program outcomes, have asked the wrong questions. He notes that the process of implementing a program always contains unknowns that change the ideal so that it looks different when and if it actually becomes operational. Outcome evaluations that assume the program has been implemented as intended may reach faulty and meaningless conclusions:

Unless one knows that a program is operating according to design, there may be little reason to expect it to produce the desired outcomes. Furthermore, until the program is implemented and a "treatment" is believed to be in operation, there is little reason to evaluate outcomes.\(^{16}\)

A utilization-focused approach to evaluation, he concludes, must frame the evaluation question in the context of program implementation, and if desired, program outcomes.

Two authors have proposed organizing many of the above considerations into a sequential, multi-step feasibility analysis to identify high-utility foci. Thompson\(^{17}\) recommends
a five-step thought process prior to commissioning an evaluation: (1) identification of the decisions for which information is required, (2) consideration of the feasibility and accuracy of possible studies, (3) analysis of possible decision consequences, (4) evaluation of policy effects, (5) selection of the evaluation with the highest expected utility value net of cost. Similarly, Wholey\textsuperscript{18} proposes an 'evaluability assessment' which analyzes the decisionmaking system to be served by an evaluation study and clarifies the questions to be answered. The specific task of Wholey's assessment procedure is to identify those program activities and objectives for which there exist agreed-upon measures of success and testable causal relationships. The results of the analysis are then fed back to program managers/intended users who choose the program components and objectives that are amenable to evaluation.

PRINCIPLES OF UTILITY

PRINCIPLE 7: DECISIONMAKERS SHOULD WANT AND NEED INFORMATION TO HELP THEM ANSWER THE EVALUATION QUESTION, THE INFORMATION SHOULD SERVE THEIR OWN NEEDS AND THEY SHOULD HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF HOW THE INFORMATION WILL BE USED.

PRINCIPLE 8: IT MUST BE POSSIBLE TO BRING DATA TO BEAR ON THE QUESTION WITH THE TIME AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE AND POSSIBLE/DESIRABLE TO TAKE ACTION ON EVALUATION FINDINGS.

PRINCIPLE 9: OUTCOMES SHOULD NOT BE EVALUATED WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE ABOUT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION; INFORMATION ABOUT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRAM PROCESSES IS MORE LIKELY TO PROVIDE A DIRECTION FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT THAN INFORMATION ABOUT PROGRAM OUTCOMES.
PRINCIPLE 10: A RATIONAL THOUGHT PROCESS SHOULD BE USED TO ASSESS THE INFORMATION VALUE OF ALTERNATE FOCI. THE ALTERNATIVE WITH THE HIGHEST NET UTILITY VALUE SHOULD BECOME THE FOCUS FOR EVALUATION.

Measurement and Design

The nature of evaluation research literature suggests that research in evaluation methodology has focused almost exclusively on the development of valid and reliable methods. It seems that little attention has been paid to the development of methods high in utility. The non-utilization of evaluation results may in part be due to the widespread acceptance of the faulty assumption that high methodological quality is synonymous with high utility. Based on a survey of decisionmakers engaged in evaluation, Patton observes that "Research quality never arises as an issue in the utilization of many evaluations; in the search for information, decisionmakers use whatever is available to help reduce uncertainty." He concludes:

there is little in our data to suggest that improving methodological quality in and of itself will have much effect on increasing the utilization of evaluation research. No matter how rigorous the methodology and no matter how sophisticated the statistical manipulations, evaluation research will only be useful in proportion to its relevance to decisionmakers questions (italics in original). 19

Patton adds that "decisionmakers were concerned that findings be at least sufficiently relevant that the data could be used to give some direction to pending action." As Patton points out, the concern for relevance does not mean that research
quality should be ignored; it simply means that quality is not the primary determinant of utility.

How, then, can decisionmakers gain some assurance that the method chosen will generate relevant information? Again, Patton emphasizes the importance of obtaining the active participation of decisionmakers:

Utilization-focused evaluation tries to combine a concern for research quality with a concern for relevance by involving decisionmakers in the making of critical methods and measurement decisions. Since no study is methodologically perfect, it is important for decisionmakers to know first-hand what imperfections exist — and to be included in deciding which imperfections they will have to live with in making the inevitable leap from limited data to incremental action.20

Furthermore, decisionmakers who have a personal investment in the evaluation process, states Patton, are more likely to use its product:

Involving identified decisionmakers and information users in measurement and design decisions is based on the assumption that utilization is enhanced if users believe in and have a stake in the data. Belief in the data is increased by understanding it, understanding it is enhanced by involvement in the painstaking process of making decisions about what data to collect, how to collect it, and how to analyze it.21

In this and in every step in the utility-focused evaluation process, the evaluation is tailored to the needs, wishes and beliefs of those who will use its findings.

PRINCIPLES OF UTILITY

PRINCIPLE 11: DESIGN AND MEASUREMENT DECISIONS SHOULD BE SHARED BY EVALUATOR AND DECISIONMAKERS THROUGHOUT THE EVALUATION TO INCREASE THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF, BELIEF IN AND COMMITMENT TO EVALUATION DATA.
PRINCIPLE 12: EVALUATION DESIGNS SHOULD BE SELECTED THAT ARE CREDIBLE TO DECISIONMAKERS AND EVALUATOR.

PRINCIPLE 13: MAJOR CONCEPTS, VARIABLES AND UNITS OF ANALYSIS SHOULD BE DEFINED IN TERMS MEANINGFUL TO DECISIONMAKERS.

PRINCIPLE 14: MULTIPLE METHODS AND MEASURES SHOULD BE USED AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO INCREASE THE BELIEVABILITY OF FINDINGS.

PRINCIPLE 15: METHODS SHOULD BE SELECTED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IT IS BETTER TO HAVE AN APPROXIMATE AND HIGHLY PROBABILISTIC ANSWER TO THE RIGHT QUESTION THAN A SOLID AND RELATIVELY CERTAIN ANSWER TO THE WRONG QUESTION.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation is usually regarded as the task of the evaluator. He aggregates and summarizes the data in ways he believes are meaningful, arranges the findings in what he thinks is a suitable format and interprets the results in a manner that he feels best explains the phenomenon studied. The inherent risk in this approach, as has been stressed in other sections of this chapter, is that the evaluator's perception of what is an appropriate and useful way to analyze and interpret the data may result in findings that are incomprehensible and/or irrelevant to decisionmakers. Furthermore, if decisionmakers are excluded from data analysis and data interpretation, they may have difficulty believing the findings. If that is the case, decisionmakers might choose to ignore evaluation results.

Patton urges that decisionmakers get involved in data
analysis and interpretation in an effort to ensure that findings are understandable and believable. Decisionmaker involvement with data analysis and interpretation, Patton continues, means that they will have an opportunity to think about and work with the data over a longer period of time. Familiarity with the data will avoid sudden surprises and defensive reactions among users:

evaluation feedback is most useful as part of a process of thinking about a program rather than as a one-shot information input. Thus, evaluation surprises, born of the sudden release of final reports are not likely to be particularly well received. Such surprises are more likely to increase than to reduce uncertainty.\(^{22}\)

Utility is also served, states Patton, by separating analysis from interpretation. Analysis he defines as "organizing the data, constructing appropriate statistical tables, and arranging for the data to be displayed in an orderly, usable format." Interpretation involves "making judgments about what the data mean, establishing the implications of the findings, and linking evaluation results to future action."\(^{23}\) The advantage of separating analysis from interpretation is that users can analyze, draw conclusions and make interpretations without bias introduced by judgments of the evaluator. The evaluator forms his own conclusions which are later integrated with those of decision-makers. This utility-focused approach to data analysis and interpretation, then, includes the judgments, conclusions and recommendations of both evaluators and decisionmakers.

Evaluation necessarily means making judgments. To
make judgments, standards must be developed and applied to the
data. Patton warns that problems may arise if standards are
not developed before data collection and if decisionmakers
are not involved in standards development:

Many of the most serious conflicts in evaluation research
are rooted in the failure to clearly specify standards
of desirability in advance of data collection. This can
lead both to collection of the wrong data and to intense
disagreement about the standards for interpreting data
that have already been collected. Without explicit
criteria, data can be interpreted to mean almost any­
thing about the program - or to mean nothing at all.24

On the other hand, the advantages of early standard setting
with decisionmaker participation are considerable. Patton
suggests that

going through this process ahead of time alerts partici­
pants to additional data they need in order to make sense
of the evaluation.... Involving staff or other decision­
makers in such a process helps clarify the evaluation
criteria that are being used. Finally, if decisionmakers
are involved in establishing these criteria themselves,
the evaluative process may increase their commitment to
use the data for program improvement.25

PRINCIPLES OF UTILITY

PRINCIPLE 16: DECISIONMAKERS SHOULD PARTICIPATE WITH
EVALUATORS IN ANALYZING AND INTERPRETING DATA.

PRINCIPLE 17: DATA ANALYSIS SHOULD BE SEPARATED FROM DATA
INTERPRETATION TO GIVE DECISIONMAKERS THE OPPORTUNITY
TO WORK WITH THE DATA WITHOUT BIASES INTRODUCED BY
THE EVALUATOR'S CONCLUSIONS.

PRINCIPLE 18: DATA SHOULD BE PRESENTED TO DECISIONMAKERS
AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE AND IN A FORM THAT IS SENSIBLE
TO THEM.

PRINCIPLE 19: STANDARDS OF JUDGMENT SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED
BEFORE DATA COLLECTION TO GUIDE LATER DATA INTERPRE­
TATION AND TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL INFORMATION GAPS.
Conveying the Results

There has been a strong tendency among those engaged in evaluation to limit the role of utility-promoting efforts to the dissemination process. This practice of putting all one's 'utility eggs' in one basket runs a much higher risk of failure than the participative approach to evaluation proposed in this chapter. In Patton's words

> evaluators must cease to think of dissemination as the separate and only utilization component of a project. Utilization considerations enter into the evaluation at the very beginning and at every step along the way. In utilization-focused evaluation, dissemination efforts, far from being the whole cake of utilization, are little more than the frosting on the cake.26

Evaluations which incorporate many of the principles discussed so far will have completed much of the task of promoting utility before results are conveyed to decisionmakers.

Nevertheless, a number of things can be done to ensure that findings are disseminated to decisionmakers in a useful way. Several authors27 have noted that evaluators, in their quest for highly valid studies, often fail to convey the needed information to decisionmakers in time to influence the decision. Attkisson et al. lament

> when the highly valid data are finally available, decisions have already been made. Data or no data, decisions must be made within some time interval and untimely information, regardless of its validity, is useless if the decision has already been made.28

Grobman suggests that evaluators use a formal planning procedure such as Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT) to assure that findings are conveyed to decisionmakers in time to be useful. Caro30 urges the reporting of interim
findings, particularly where decisions must be made in the short term or where decisionmakers' interest in evaluation is likely to wane. Utilization suffers also when results are presented in a form that is not meaningful to decisionmakers. Reports should avoid unnecessarily complicated and unexplained conceptualizations, technical jargon, generalities and excessive verbiage; recommendations should be specific and preferably, operational in the short term.

There has been much written about staff resistance to evaluation and the problems it creates for data collection, and, later, for program change. Evaluations can be unsettling, anxiety-producing experiences for program staff. Clearly, staff will be more receptive to evaluation, to its findings and to resulting change if their anonymity is protected whenever possible. Likert and Lippitt urge that staff members must receive assurances that the objective of research is to discover the relative effectiveness of different methods and principles and that the study is in no way an attempt to perform a policing function. The emphasis must be on discovering what principles work best and why, and not on finding and reporting which individuals are doing their jobs well or poorly. Staff cooperation means greater likelihood that evaluation findings will be translated into program change. Caro points out that cooperation is fostered when administrators share evaluation findings with subordinates.

Finally, Patton suggests that the identity of the evaluator is an important factor in establishing the
evaluation's credibility among users. Yet he notes that very few evaluation reports identify the author. The risk of anonymous authorship is that users who are unable to assess the credibility of the report's source may be reluctant to trust in its findings. Patton goes further. He urges that both evaluators and key persons for whom the evaluation is commissioned should be identified in all reports and presentations. By doing so, there is no question that the evaluation has the full support and participation of management.

PRINCIPLES OF UTILITY

PRINCIPLE 20: RESULTS MUST BE AVAILABLE TO DECISIONMAKERS IN TIME TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE MAKING OF DECISIONS.

PRINCIPLE 21: INTERIM FINDINGS SHOULD BE REPORTED TO DECISIONMAKERS AS SOON AS IS FEASIBLE.

PRINCIPLE 22: FINDINGS SHOULD BE CONVEYED TO USERS IN A CLEAR AND CONCISE MANNER, AND IN A FORM THAT CAN BE READILY UNDERSTOOD BY DECISIONMAKERS; RECOMMENDATIONS SHOULD BE SPECIFIC AND CAPABLE OF BEING OPERATIONALIZED.

PRINCIPLE 23: FINDINGS SHOULD PROTECT THE ANONYMITY OF STAFF MEMBERS WHENEVER POSSIBLE.

PRINCIPLE 24: BOTH EVALUATORS AND THOSE FOR WHOM THE EVALUATION IS CONDUCTED SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED IN ALL DISSEMINATION EFFORTS.

Evaluating Evaluation

In the aftermath of evaluation it may be apparent that some aspects of the evaluation were highly successful; it may also be clear that other aspects were inadequately planned, poorly executed or inherently dysfunctional. Some
form of self-renewal mechanism will help to ensure that workable model elements are included in future evaluations (where appropriate) and that unworkable model elements are modified or deleted. In effect, evaluation itself should be evaluated to determine what was deficient, what worked well, what improvements can be made and how those improvements can be put into practice. In the final analysis, 'success' for utility-focused evaluation will be measured by the answer to the question "Did evaluation results improve the rationality of program decisionmaking?" Smoothing the model's rough edges and ensuring it remains in step with changing agency circumstances will keep evaluation utilitarian.

PRINCIPLE OF UTILITY

PRINCIPLE 25: AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS, EVALUATION ITSELF SHOULD BE ASSESSED, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO ITS PRIMARY PURPOSE - TO INCREASE THE RATIONALITY OF DECISIONMAKING.

Summary

Equipped with these guidelines for evaluation, the thesis turns next to the task of fashioning a utility-focused evaluation model for the Community Service Order Program. But first, the context of the case study is described.
CHAPTER III

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA CORRECTIONS BRANCH

An Overview

The British Columbia Corrections Branch (also referred to as the 'Corrections Branch' or the 'Branch') is a division of the provincial Ministry of the Attorney-General. Its primary functions are to provide services, programs and facilities for those in conflict with the law. It offers programs that serve as alternatives to court action (Pre-court Services), custody and supervision for those on remand from the court (Pre-Trial Services), information reports to assist the court in sentencing (Court Services), supervision of offenders placed on probation (Community Services), security facilities for juveniles and adults (Institutional Services), supervision of those returning to the community from provincial gaols (Community Re-entry Services), and informational, counselling and enforcement services in the area of Family Relations (Family and Children's Services). ¹

Figure 1 shows the senior portion of the Branch's organization structure. The province is divided into six administrative regions. Each region is headed by a Regional
FIGURE 1: ORGANIZATION CHART OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA CORRECTIONS BRANCH, MINISTRY OF ATTORNEY-GENERAL, 1979

Director of Corrections who assumes responsibility for providing all provincial correctional services within his geographical area. Each region has its own budget, allocates resources, hires and fires staff and develops programs in line with Branch policy and according to its particular needs and priorities. As shown in Figure 1 there are a number of centralized support services within the Office of the Commissioner.

Decisionmaking at the provincial level is largely the responsibility of the Branch Management Committee. This committee is comprised of the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner, Regional Directors of Corrections, and heads of the centralized support services (see Figure 1). It is they who determine Branch direction, set policy, establish priorities and allocate funds to the six regions.²

Branch expenditures represent about one percent of the provincial total. Figure 2 illustrates the breakdown of estimated Branch expenditures for the year 1978/79, expressed in percentages and dollars. The Branch has a staff complement of two thousand sixty-four (1978 figure). A breakdown by function is shown in Figure 3. Growth in the Branch has been dramatic over the past decade. Its expenditures quintupled between 1968/69 and 1978/79, and doubled between 1975/76 and 1978/79.³
FIGURE 2: ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES FOR THE BRITISH COLUMBIA CORRECTIONS BRANCH, BY TYPE, 1978-1979

INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES 56% ($30.2M)

ADMINISTRATION 15% ($8.1M)

COMMUNITY SERVICES 29% ($15.7M)

TOTAL EXPENDITURES (EST.): $53.9M

FIGURE 3: BRITISH COLUMBIA CORRECTIONS BRANCH STAFF, BY FUNCTION, 1978–1979

INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES 60% (1246)

ADMINISTRATION 11% (226)

COMMUNITY SERVICES 29% (592)

TOTAL STAFF: 2064

The Vancouver Region

The Vancouver Region of the Corrections Branch is located principally in the heavily populated southwest corner of the province (see Figure 4). Its boundaries include the City of Vancouver, North and West Vancouver, Squamish, Pemberton, Sechelt, Powell River, Bella Coola, Bella Bella and Ocean Falls. In terms of dollars spent, the Vancouver Region is the largest of the six regions in the Branch. In 1978/79 it accounted for thirty one percent of the total Branch budget. Located in the region is the Branch's largest provincial gaol, Lower Mainland Regional Correctional Centre (Oakalla District). Over half of the Region's budget (fifty nine percent in 1978) is assigned to this institution where forty percent of provincial inmates are housed. In addition, the Region administers three Community Correctional Centres, two juvenile residential correctional facilities and seventeen community-based offices offering probation and Family Court Services.

The Region is divided into four districts -- North Shore, Vancouver West, Vancouver East and Oakalla. The first three districts represent geographical areas in which the program of interest, the Community Service Order Program, operates. The fourth district, Oakalla, is a provincial gaol and is of no direct interest to this study. Programs and facilities in the region that are not relevant to the CSO Program are not considered further.

Figure 5 shows the upper portion of the Region's organ-
* includes Squamish, Sechelt, Powell River, Bella Coola, Bella Bella, Ocean Falls.
FIGURE 5: ORGANIZATION CHART OF THE VANCOUVER REGION, BRITISH COLUMBIA CORRECTIONS BRANCH, 1979

COMMISSIONER

REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF CORRECTIONS

REGIONAL SUPPORT STAFF

DISTRICT DIRECTOR OAKALLA

DISTRICT DIRECTOR VANCOUVER WEST

DISTRICT DIRECTOR NORTH SHORE

DISTRICT DIRECTOR VANCOUVER EAST

DIRECTOR Y.D.C.

DIRECTOR LAKESIDE C.C.

NOTES: 

a Source: E. W. Harrison, Regional Director of Corrections, Vancouver Region

b Youth Detention Centre

c Lakeside Correctional Centre
izational structure. Figure 6 illustrates the lower portion of the regional structure using the Powell River service delivery unit as an example (in this study a service delivery unit is defined as a community-based office from which B.C. Corrections Branch services are dispensed. Each office services a specified geographical area). Each service delivery unit (with the exception of Squamish and Sechelt) is supervised by a resident Local Director. Probation Officers and the Community Service Officer are directly accountable to a Local Director. Several Local Directors report to a District Director who, in turn, answers to the Regional Director of Corrections.

Region-level decisionmaking is carried out by the Regional Management Committee whose function (on the regional scale) is similar to that of the Branch Management Committee. It is made up of the Regional Director of Corrections, the four District Director, the Director of the Youth Detention Centre, the Director of Lakeside Correctional Centre and a number of regional support staff. Decisions are normally made by group consensus. The right to veto a committee decision or rule on any issue (although rarely done) is retained by the Regional Director of Corrections. The Regional Management Committee determines all regional policy, sets regional priorities, and advises the Regional Director of Corrections on the allocation and control of the regional budget.  

At the lowest management level, Local Directors, together with the District Director, comprise the District Management
FIGURE 6: ORGANIZATION CHART OF THE POWELL RIVER SERVICE DELIVERY UNIT

NOTE: The Sechelt Service Delivery Unit is also administered by the Powell River Local Director but is omitted for the sake of clarity.
Committee. This body deals with administrative concerns at the district and service delivery level, and allocates and oversees the district budget.

**Program Evaluation**

Only recently has the Branch developed an administrative support unit with the specific mandate of program evaluation. The Program Analysis and Evaluation Section (see Figure 1) is about two and one half years old. It is charged with program planning and development, program policy analysis, and program evaluation. About sixty percent of its work takes the form of planning and analysis for the Branch Management Committee. The section will undertake the design of program evaluations at the regional level on the basis of one evaluation per region per year. Their program evaluation services to the region are consultative only; responsibility for carrying out the evaluation itself rests with the region. There are five analysts in the section; each is assigned to a specific group of programs.³

Also within the Commissioner’s Office is the Operations and Management Information Section. This group gathers and collates information about all aspects of Branch operations and provides data to management and program staff on request. Much of the section's energies over its five years in operation have been devoted to the development of a computerized management information system which is still in the making.⁸

In the Vancouver Region there are three support staff potentially concerned with program evaluation -- a Resources
Coordinator and two Program Support persons. Primary responsibilities of the Resources Coordinator include advice-giving related to the preparation of the regional budget, monitoring regional expenditures and identifying potential cost savings. Evaluations concerned with program costs would undoubtedly involve this individual. The role of the Program Support persons is multidimensional, but includes such activities as program planning, implementation and evaluation; policy analysis; information and consultative services to management and staff; and liaison with other agencies. All three of these individuals report directly to the Regional Director of Corrections and all three sit on the Regional Management Committee in an advisory capacity.

A promising evaluation resource for the B.C. Corrections Branch is the newly formed Criminology Research Centre at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. The Centre describes its services in the following quote:

The main function of the Centre is to facilitate cooperative research with criminal justice programs and agencies in British Columbia. The primary focus will be to provide information for use by personnel, planners, evaluators, and theoretical investigators in making policy decisions within the system.... The Centre has a Director and two Research Associates... In addition to personnel, the Centre offers an information service based on an extensive collection of research reports and books on research methodology, as well as access to the traditional sources of information in this area.
CHAPTER IV

THE COMMUNITY SERVICE ORDER PROGRAM

This chapter describes the Community Service Order Program (CSO Program) as it operates in the area under study ('Community Service Order Program' is used in a broad sense to include CSO Program-related activities of the Corrections Branch and of other agencies and persons; the term is also used in a narrow sense to refer only to program aspects under the direct control of the Corrections Branch. Which meaning applies should be apparent from the context in which it is used). It briefly examines the concept and purpose of the program; it traces the development of the program in the Branch; it explains how offenders enter and participate in the program; finally, it describes the manner in which the program is administered in the Vancouver Region.

Concept and Purpose

The basic concept of the Community Service Order Program is that offenders (principally young offenders) should perform work for the benefit of the community or the victim. It is viewed as reparation for harm done and is considered a means to achieve a fundamental kind of justice. Typical tasks undertaken by offenders include the maintenance of community parks and facilities, services to special needs groups such as the
aged and the handicapped and work for the individual or business (the victim) offended.

The rationale for the program is described in this quote from the Branch Annual Report:

The Community Service Order Program continues to be a priority of the Branch.... More than many correctional programs, it epitomizes a sense of justice as not only a clear response to crime and delinquency, but also a program which allows humane and effective consequences for offences, consequences which are economical to operate, which avoid the unnecessary use of prison, and which are available to the many offenders who are unable to pay a fine.

From this rationale the Branch developed four program objectives:

To provide an alternative to the court process and a sentencing alternative to the court, which:

1. is perceived by the community and the offender as enabling the offender to make amends for the offense by rendering an identified service to the community,

2. actively involves the community in the administration of justice,

3. is more economical in terms of social and financial costs than traditional sentencing alternatives of probation and gaol,

4. is administered and enforced pursuant to a court order or diversion agreement consistent with their intent and within the operational guidelines of the CSO Program.

Historical Development

The concept of Community Service by offenders has been operating informally in this province for many years. However, it was not until the 1970's that Community Service was proposed as a Branch program for juveniles and adults. By December, 1974, the Branch had begun to hire Community Service Officers to manage pilot projects in nine centres around the province.
Later the following year, the project was expanded province-wide. For the past three years Community Service Officers have been operating in every major location in the province.\textsuperscript{3} Figure 7 shows the number of case months (a case month is one offender supervised for one month) of supervision on the CSO Program over a three year period. The projected figures for April, 1978 to March, 1980 are probably high.\textsuperscript{4} The graph seems to suggest that use of the program is increasing, although not dramatically.

Program Process

This section describes in simplified terms how persons gain entry to the CSO Program and relates the workings of the program itself. For the sake of clarity some nuances of the processes are not mentioned and on some points, the description is not strictly accurate. However, this does not impair one's understanding of the program. Offenders gain entry to the CSO Program via two processes ('offender' is broadly defined in this study to refer to persons who have come to the attention of a Criminal Justice agency by allegedly committing an offence, yet have not been convicted of an offence by the court, i.e., persons diverted from the court process or those awaiting court process. It also refers to those convicted of an offence by the court. Technically, however, only convicted persons are offenders).
FIGURE 7: CASE MONTHS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE COMPLETED, APRIL, 1977 TO MARCH, 1980 (EST.)

CASE MONTHS (000'S)

Source: Operations and Management Information Section, B.C. Corrections Branch, 1980.
They may enter by diversion or by court order. The flow charts in Figure 8 and Figure 9 illustrate the basic processes described below.

Entry by Diversion

Diversion is the process by which an offender is dealt with by the Criminal Justice System without court intervention. Charges against selected offenders are placed in abeyance, usually with the offender's promise that he will satisfy certain conditions, notably, that he will perform Community Service. Diversion to the CSO Program is only used if the offender admits his guilt (a requisite of any form of diversion), if the offence is minor, if he is unlikely to commit another offence and if he agrees to complete a specified amount of Community Service. It is normally reserved for those with no previous criminal record and in the main is used for juveniles (offenders under seventeen years of age).

The process is illustrated in Figure 8. The police opt to charge the offender. The charge and the circumstances of the offence are reviewed by the prosecutor. The prosecutor must decide to pursue the matter in court or divert the offender. If diversion appears to be appropriate, the prosecutor refers the matter to the Probation Officer who interviews the offender. Based on the interview, the Probation Officer recommends court action or diversion to
FIGURE 8: ENTRY TO THE COMMUNITY SERVICE ORDER PROGRAM, BY DIVERSION

POLICE

CORRECTIONS AND CSO PROGRAM

PROSECUTOR

COURT
the CSO Program (other forms of diversion are possible but are not relevant to this discussion). With selected diverstees, the Probation Officer briefs the offender on the CSO Program and asks him if he is prepared to undertake some Community Service. If he agrees, a recommendation is made to the prosecutor that the offender be diverted to the program. If the prosecutor concurs with the recommendation, a contract is drawn up by the Probation Officer (in consultation with the Community Service Officer) specifying the type of work to be done, the work placement and the number of hours to be worked.

Entry by Court Process

In the alternate process, the prosecutor has weighed the circumstances of the offence and has deemed it to be in the best interests of the offender and/or the community to proceed with charges. The offender is placed before the court where he pleads guilty or not guilty to the charge. If the matter goes to trial and the accused is found not guilty or if the case is dismissed the accused leaves the Criminal Justice System. Following a plea of guilty or a finding of guilty by the court, and where the court opts for the Community Service Order Program, the offender is placed on a Probation Order (a court order requiring an offender to do or not to do particular things during a specified period of time) with the condition that he complete a specified number of hours of Community Service.
FIGURE 9: ENTRY TO THE COMMUNITY SERVICE ORDER PROGRAM, BY COURT ORDER
Program Activity

From this point forward the sequence of events is the same for offenders who enter the program by diversion or by court order. The Community Service Officer interviews the offender and consults with the Probation Officer to determine an appropriate work placement. The placement is chosen and the Community Service Officer introduces the offender to the agency, group or individual for whom he will work. A work schedule is arranged and the Community Service Officer or a designated person in the work placement supervises the offender on the job. When the offender completes his assigned number of Community Service hours his contact with the program ends. Completion of Community Service must precede or coincide with the termination of the offender's Probation Order.

Program Administration

The CSO Program is administered by the same organization structure that provides core community correctional services. The program has no specialized program director or coordinator; only Community Service Officers work exclusively on program tasks. Probation Officers provide a number of services, only one of which involves the CSO Program. Provincial program policy is determined by the Branch Management Committee. The manner in which the program is operationalized in the region is determined by the Regional
Management Committee described in Chapter III. The Regional Director of Corrections in conjunction with District Directors and regional support staff develop regional program policy, identify program strategies, allocate resources to the program, monitor the program's effectiveness, and liaise with the community and other components of the Criminal Justice System. Each District Director is responsible for the overall operation of the program in his district. Each Local Director oversees the delivery of program services in his service delivery unit.

There are eleven Community Service Officers in the Vancouver Region (see Figure 10). Seven of those are in the North Shore District; two are in each of the Vancouver West District and Vancouver East District. Community Service Officers in locations (1), (2) and (3) in Figure 10 are half-time workers only. Those in locations (1) through (5) inclusive contract their services to the Branch; the remainder are regular employees. Two administrative anomalies exist in the region. In Squamish, there is no Community Service Officer and program tasks are carried out on a limited basis by the Probation Officers. In each of Bella Bella, Bella Coola and Ocean Falls there is a part-time Community Service Officer but no resident Probation Officer.

The Community Service Officer has several functions. He develops work placements (a job bank) for offenders; he assigns the offender to a suitable task; he directly or indirectly monitors the offender's progress on the job; he reports the offender's progress to the Probation Officer and/or
FIGURE 10: LOCATION OF COMMUNITY SERVICE OFFICERS IN THE VANCOUVER REGION OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA CORRECTIONS BRANCH
the court as required; he completes a written progress report at the end of the Community Service.

For present purposes there are four types of Probation Orders (see Figure 11). Type 1 requires an offender to report regularly to a Probation Officer and, in addition, to undertake Community Service. Type 2 has no reporting condition but includes Community Service. And with Type 4 Probation Orders, the offender has no obligation to report nor must he complete Community Service. Only offenders with Types 1 and 2 Probation Orders are participants in the CSO Program. Files of Type 2 offenders are often maintained by the Community Service Officer and minimal liaison with a Probation Officer is necessary. With Type 1 offenders the Probation Officer assumes primary responsibility for the case. The Community Service Officer provides the Probation Officer with periodic reports on their mutual client's progress.

Each month, each service delivery unit forwards basic program statistics to the regional office. Data includes the number of hours and type of Community Service completed, the number of offenders on the program and the means of entry. At Regional Office the data is collated and forwarded to the Branch Operations and Management Information Section for final compilation and analysis. This collated information is then made available to Region and Branch managers for management purposes.
FIGURE 11: TYPES OF PROBATION ORDERS IMPOSED BY THE COURTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>REPORT</th>
<th>NO REPORT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY SERVICE</td>
<td>TYPE 1</td>
<td>TYPE 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO COMMUNITY SERVICE</td>
<td>TYPE 3</td>
<td>TYPE 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER V

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES - UTILITY-FOCUSED EVALUATION
FOR THE COMMUNITY SERVICE ORDER PROGRAM

This chapter develops an evaluation model for the Community Service Order Program using the Utility Principles of Chapter II as a basis for design. The specific nature of each model element is determined by considering the context in which the program operates. The first five sections of the chapter, ending with 'Methodology' develop the structure of the model; the remaining section proposes a process for each stage in the evaluation.

Not all the principles from Chapter II are explicitly addressed. Those that are applied are those that lend themselves to illustration (see Thesis Methodology, Chapter I for elaboration). At the end of the chapter the model is summarized in relation to its utilitarian characteristics.

A Purpose for Community Service Order Program Evaluation

It was argued in Chapter I that the fundamental reason for evaluation should be to provide administrators with information that will lead to more rational program decisions. However, those commissioning evaluation would do well to have a more specific purpose in mind. Numerous reasons for
evaluation have been suggested in the literature. Those proposed by two authors are discussed below and arguments are put forward for the purposes deemed appropriate for the CSO Program.

Scriven\(^1\) distinguishes between summative and formative evaluation. Summative evaluations attempt to determine the essential effectiveness of programs. They are used to make decisions about continuing or terminating, expanding or cutting back a program. As such, summative information is often useful to policymakers and funders. Formative evaluations focus on ways of improving and enhancing programs, not only in their early stages but throughout their lifetime. Formative evaluation is of central interest to program administrators and staff. Patton\(^2\) differentiates among evaluations of program outcomes, program theory and program implementation. Outcome evaluations are by far the most common. The object is to determine the extent to which actual program outcomes match desired outcomes or goals. Program theory evaluations attempt to validate hypothesized cause-effect relationships. Does the treatment imposed result in the desired effects? Implementation evaluations seek to determine whether or not the program has been implemented in the manner intended. If the operating program differs from the intended program, implementation evaluation might examine the effectiveness of current operations and identify program improvements where required.

Although a single evaluation could conceivably be form-
ative as well as summative and could examine program outcomes, theory and implementation, such a focus would seem too broad to ensure useful findings. A manageable focus in the study context probably means making choices among the purposes discussed. The first argument is that CSO Program evaluation should serve formative as opposed to summative decisions. Summative decisions, it would appear, are neither pending nor appropriate at this stage in the program's life. There is little question that the CSO Program is here to stay. The program now operates province-wide and both the Branch and the Vancouver Region have assigned the program a high priority. To discontinue or even cut back the program would be extremely difficult. To consider expansion of the program at this time is premature. Decisionmakers have not had time to iron the wrinkles out of only recently developed policies and procedures and are unlikely to have a clear idea of the most effective program strategies. To expand before program weaknesses are identified and strengthened would make later changes more difficult, would waste limited resources and jeopardize program effectiveness.

It would seem, then, that summative information is not relevant to the current needs of regional decisionmakers. More probable is that decisionmakers will have questions about how the program is functioning and how it can be improved. The program is young. Policies and procedures have yet to be refined; improvements based on formal, systematic analyses have yet to be made. In sum, formative evaluation is more likely
to produce relevant, useful information than summative evaluation.

The second argument is that information about program implementation is more pertinent to the needs of CSO Program decisionmakers than information about either program outcomes or program theory. Outcome evaluation appears inappropriate for two reasons: (1) decisionmakers must know to what extent the CSO Program has been implemented in order to assign meaning to measured outcomes (see Chapter Two); and little information currently exists about the state of CSO Program implementation, (2) outcomes information alone is of limited use in identifying needed program improvements.

A similar argument leads to the rejection of program theory as a suitable purpose. Until it can first be ascertained that the desired 'treatment' is in place, it is premature to attempt to determine the validity of that treatment.

Information about program implementation, therefore, is a prerequisite (or at least a co-requisite) to other kinds of evaluation efforts. In the study context, an absence of such information suggests that CSO Program evaluation should seek to determine the extent to which the program is operating as desired.

Several observations suggest that the CSO Program may, indeed, not be operating as intended and lend weight to the argument for an implementation focus: (1) the program was largely developed by trial and error in the field, (2) regional program objectives were not published until 1979; program
policies and procedures were not clearly defined until 1978, 
(3) large disparities appear to exist among service delivery 
units in attitudes toward and use of the CSO Program, (4) 
parts of the region are physically, and to some extent, function­
ally isolated from the rest of the region, (5) communities with­
in the region differ in size and socio-economic make-up, af­
fecting the nature of the target population and influencing 
program opportunities, (6) the program is highly decentralized 
and fully integrated with other services, reducing the likel­
hood of standardized operations. These observations raise the 
possibility that the program differs significantly from one 
service delivery unit to the next and differs significantly 
from that which was intended.

The uncertainty facing program managers is not knowing 
whether those differences are functional or dysfunctional. 
Simply knowing that a program does or does not conform to that 
which was intended is not sufficient to be useful. CSO Pro­
gram decisionmakers will want to know if existing modes of 
operation are functional, regardless of original intentions. 
If they are not functional, information should be gathered 
that will enable decisionmakers to identify effective modific­
ations.

To summarize, it is the authors contention that the 
purposes for evaluating the CSO Program should be: (1) to 
serve formative decisions, (2) to determine the extent to 
which the program has been implemented, (3) to ascertain the 
feasibility of intended and existing program operations and
(4) to identify more appropriate modes of operation if and where required. The arguments presented are not to say that outcomes should never be examined or summative decisions never made. The purposes suggested are specific to this stage in the program's development and to the region's current level of knowledge about the program. As the program matures and as more information is gathered about it, future evaluations would be expected to address different purposes.

Relevant Decisionmakers

In keeping with the Utility Principle developed in Chapter II, this section seeks to identify the CSO Program decisionmakers with the most pressing information needs. Serving these individuals represents the most efficient (utilitarian) allocation of evaluation resources.

It will be recalled from Chapter III that there are four decisionmaking levels in the regional hierarchy - the Regional Management Committee, District Directors, Local Directors and service providers (in this context 'service providers' are persons who provide direct services to the public and who are employed by an agency in the Criminal Justice System). Persons at each level will make program decisions of a different order. Recognizing that, this discussion can refine its focus by asking (1) What kinds of decisions are there? (2) Which are most critical to this program/agency at this point in time? (3) Who is centrally involved in making those decisions?
Weiss distinguishes three kinds of decisions in an organization - policy, strategic (or managerial) and tactical decisions:

Policy decisions are made at the highest level: Should the program be continued or terminated, expanded or cut back...? Strategic decisions have to do with fundamental choices about modes of operation.... Which strategies of intervention should be continued, modified or initiated ...? Tactical decisions have to do with day-to-day program practices, choices about operating procedures.

Matching this typology with the role descriptions of decision-makers in the Vancouver Region, it can be seen that the Regional Management Committee makes both policy (expand or cut back) and strategy decisions; individual District Directors may make minor strategy decisions but are principally charged with implementing policies and strategies; Local Directors, in conjunction with service providers, take responsibility for tactical program decisions.

But which decisionmaker should be the primary user of evaluation results? Policy decisions, as defined by Weiss, are synonymous with Soiven's summative decisions and in the previous section were deemed a low-utility focus for CSO Program evaluation at this time. Strategy decisions, it has been said, involve "fundamental choices about modes of operation." As such, strategy decisions would seem to be in line with the earlier proposed foci - program implementation and program improvement. Furthermore, evaluative information about the state and worth of current program strategies is absent. And clearly, lower order (tactical) decisions are better made after strategies have been determined to be
effective, or have been discarded or improved. Information for tactical decisions will serve little purpose if the strategies which the tactics are designed to achieve are dysfunctional. Strategy decisions, therefore, appear to be the most critical and information aiding those who must make strategy decisions would seem to be the most useful - in this case, the Regional Management Committee.

The conclusion reached is that the primary group of decisionmakers for whom evaluation of the CSO Program should be focused is the Regional Management Committee.

The Evaluation Team

A major theme in this paper is that evaluation will have high utilization potential when those affected by evaluation findings are active participants in the evaluation effort. Not only is there more assurance that results will be relevant, but there is more likelihood that staff will cooperate with the evaluation, find its recommendations acceptable and participate in implementing change. Based on this premise of participative evaluation, this section identifies and discusses five parties to plan and undertake evaluation of the CSO Program.

The choice of who should evaluate springs from five considerations, some of which call to mind the Utility Principles developed in Chapter II: (1) one individual should be responsible for carrying out the substantive work
of developing the evaluation plan, collecting and collating the data and writing the report, (2) primary decisionmakers should be involved in making all major decisions which define the evaluation effort, (3) secondary decisionmakers (agency and non-agency service providers) should have input into the evaluation effort, (4) recognizing the inexperience and limited skills of regional staff in program evaluation, expert advice from outside the organization might augment the utility and validity of evaluation results, (5) data collection could be expedited if more than one person were involved.

These considerations suggest five parties to plan and implement the evaluation: (1) a Regional Planner/Evaluator, (2) a Task Force comprised of primary decisionmakers, (3) an Advisory Group of secondary decisionmakers, (4) an External Consultant, (5) Research Assistants. Each is discussed below.

Regional Planner/Evaluator

Currently, there are two Program Support Officers in the region whose duties include liaison, information and consultative services as well as limited planning and evaluation activities related to regional programs. It would appear that a Regional Planner/Evaluator could be created by simply reorganizing the duties of these two positions. One position would specialize in liaison, information and consultative services for both community-based and institutional programs; the other would focus solely on planning and evaluation activities. Both would remain located in the Regional
Office and would be directly accountable to the Regional Director of Corrections. The Regional Planner/Evaluator would participate in and be a major contributor to all long and short range regional planning functions and all regional evaluation functions. He would be an advisory member of the Regional Management Committee to whom he would provide guidance on planning and evaluation issues. In addition, he would serve as a member of the Evaluation Task Force (discussed next) where he would function as a co-decisionmaker, executor and group expert on evaluation matters. Based on the ideas and decisions of the Task Force as a whole, the Regional Planner/Evaluator would write up the evaluation plan, gather and collate the data, and write the preliminary and final reports.

The concept of the Regional Planner/Evaluator has several advantages: (1) broadening the scope of the CSO Program evaluator to include all regional planning and evaluation activities makes the position an economically viable proposition, (2) incorporating planning activities in the job description promotes the integration of planning and evaluation, (3) locating the Regional Planner/Evaluator at Regional Office and including him in the Regional Management Committee and in the Evaluation Task Force promotes interaction between the evaluator and program managers, (4) utilizing the existing position of Program Support Officer precludes the need for additional funds (consent from Treasury Board for a new position would be highly unlikely), (5) choosing an 'in-house' evaluator means his services are available on demand and permits regional management to define
his terms of reference. Furthermore, as a regular Regional Office employee, the Regional Planner/Evaluator would have an in-depth knowledge of the region (and the CSO Program) and could develop effective working relationships with Branch and Region management and with other Criminal Justice personnel.

**Evaluation Task Force**

The Evaluation Task Force would include the Regional Director of Corrections, one District Director, one Local Director and the Regional Planner/Evaluator. The District Director and the Local Director would be selected by the Regional Director of Corrections based on his knowledge of their experience, analytical skills and commitment to evaluation. Their task would be to make all major decisions that would shape the evaluation plan, its implementation, its findings and the manner in which the findings are disseminated. Managers on the Task Force would work actively with the Regional Planner/Evaluator to develop and carry out the evaluation effort. At two points in time (when the evaluation plan is completed and when preliminary findings are available) the Task Force would report its efforts to the Regional Management Committee for review and approval. All Task Force members would participate in presenting findings to regional staff.

Several strong arguments in favour of the Task Force can be made: (1) of most importance, it is a means to engage the active participation of decisionmakers in the evaluation effort, (2) including each level of management in the Task Force.
provides a breadth of view that will facilitate useful results, (3) the presence of two major decisionmakers on the Task Force lends credibility and influence to the evaluation effort and promotes the utilization of results, (4) the four-member Task Force is small enough to be task oriented.

Advisory Group

The Advisory Group would be composed of service providers from both within and outside the agency. It could include a Local Director, Probation Officer, Community Service Officer, judge, Crown Prosecutor, a placement agency representative and an offender/participant.

The group's basic function is to act as a sounding board for proposals and findings submitted to them by the Task Force. The Task Force would approach the Advisory Group with a request for specific feedback at several stages in the evaluation project. Generally speaking, the group would address three questions: (1) Is the evaluation plan complete, practicable, acceptable? (2) Are the findings reasonable? Do they appear to concur with our own observations? (3) Are the recommendations valid, reasonable, acceptable, capable of being implemented? Suggestions made by the Advisory Group would be taken under consideration by the Task Force and the evaluation modified as required. These advisors could function as a group (and provide a collective response to the Task Force), as individuals or as both.

Arguments for having an Advisory Group are two-fold:
(1) it is a means of obtaining the varied perspectives of a broad spectrum of service providers, and as such, reduces the possibility of invalid findings and inappropriate action, (2) it permits service providers to be and feel a part of the evaluation effort, thereby increasing the evaluation's credibility and acceptance among staff.

External Consultant

The External Consultant is defined in this context as any person or group who are not employees of the Vancouver Region administration but who may or may not be an employee of the Branch. He/they would have two basic functions: (1) to provide high calibre advice to the Regional Planner/Evaluator and the Task Force on particularly complex matters and (2) lend objectivity and a detached perspective to the evaluation.

Three alternatives for the External Consultant are proposed, none of which are mutually exclusive: (1) the Program Analysis and Evaluation Section, Office of the Commissioner, (2) the Criminology Research Centre, Simon Fraser University, (3) a private consultant. A description of alternatives (1) and (2) is provided in Chapter III. All of these resources have been utilized by the Vancouver Region in the past and therefore, have considerable familiarity with the organization and its programs. Alternatives (1) and (2) are desirable in as much as their services are cost-free. Alternative (3) has the advantage of availability on demand.
Research Assistants

One or two Research Assistants are suggested to assist the Regional Planner/Evaluator in collecting and collating the data. Research Assistants would be employed as required and would likely be students employed for the summer or students serving practicums related to the evaluation project.

A Critical Focus

In the first section of this chapter it was stated that evaluation of the CSO Program should (1) determine the extent to which the program has been implemented, (2) ascertain what is working and what is not and (3) if necessary, identify more functional modes of operation. This section narrows the focus for CSO Program evaluation yet again. Considerations relevant to choosing the focus are reviewed. Alternative emphases within the rubric of implementation evaluation are examined. An argument is made for a particular focus-program processes. Finally, five processes within the CSO Program are identified and their relative merits as targets for evaluation are assessed.

A number of considerations relevant to choosing the focus for evaluation were raised in Chapter II. Generally, it was stated that the focus must represent the most pressing program concerns and must be chosen for its capacity to generate relevant, desirable, obtainable, usable and timely information. It was also suggested that decisionmakers assess the potential information value (in relation to the identified information need), of alternative foci, then choose the focus with the highest potential for utility. Utility Principles raised in
Chapter II are restated below in the form of questions. They serve as a 'Utility Checklist' for those choosing the focus for CSO Program evaluation: (1) Do decisionmakers want and need information which this focus would provide? (2) Do decisionmakers want the information for their own purposes, not simply for someone else, (3) Can data be brought to bear on the question? (4) Is the focus manageable in the time allotted? Would a narrower or broader focus be likely to improve the usefulness of findings? (5) Has a decision already been made (overtly or covertly) concerning this question? (6) Can decisionmakers indicate how they would use the information obtained? (7) Has the agency the resources and mandate to take action on possible evaluation findings where action is indicated? (8) Is it desirable to change this aspect of the program? What consequences might result if tentatively identified solutions were implemented? (9) All things considered, will addressing this question provide useful information to program decisionmakers?

The position has been taken that evaluation of the CSO Program should examine the extent to which the program has been implemented. Patton\textsuperscript{5} notes that there are three aspects of a program upon which an implementation evaluation can focus: (1) program effort, (2) program processes and (3) treatment specification.

Evaluation of program effort addresses the questions "What did you do and how well did you do it?" The object is to document the quantity and quality of activity that takes place in relation to some standard of what was expected.\textsuperscript{6}
That is, it is an assessment of input or effort without regard to output. Effort evaluation moves a step beyond the question "Does the program exist?" to explore the question "How active is the program?" Tripodi describes effort evaluation this way:

Evaluation of program effort refers to an assessment of the amounts and kinds of program activities considered necessary for the accomplishment of program goals within a particular stage of development. It refers not only to staff time, activity and commitment, but also to the allocation and use of material resources - funds, space, equipment, etc.... Information such as the following might be obtained about program effort: What techniques for recruiting potential clientele have been employed; how much staff time, effort, funds, etc. have been expended; what ancillary resources have been used, e.g., outside consultation, media, public relations, etc.? Assessing program effort is probably the easiest type of evaluation. In Suchman's words "it is easier to maintain administrative records than to measure success of efforts." However, the value of effort information to decisionmakers is apt to be limited.

The second option in implementation analysis is to focus on program processes. The object is to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program by examining the way in which it actually operates. Process evaluations are concerned with why things happen the way they do, how program components fit together and how people perceive the program. The emphasis is on how outcomes are produced rather than the outcomes themselves. Patton elaborates:

Process evaluations search for explanations of the successes, failures and changes in a program. Under field conditions in the real world, people and unforeseen circumstances shape programs and modify initial plans in ways that are rarely
trivial. The process evaluator sets out to understand and document the day-to-day reality of the setting or settings under study. He tries to unravel what is actually happening in a program by searching for the major patterns and important nuances that give the program its character. A process evaluation requires sensitivity to both qualitative and quantitative changes in programs throughout their development; it means becoming intimately acquainted with the details of the program. Process evaluations look not only at formal activities and anticipated outcomes, but also investigate informal patterns and unanticipated consequences in the full context of program implementation and development. Finally, process evaluations usually include perceptions of people close to the program about how things are going. A variety of perspectives may be sought from people inside and outside the program.

A third focus for the implementation evaluation is treatment specification. Specifying the program treatment involves identifying and measuring those aspects of the program (independent variables) that are expected to affect outcomes (dependent variables). "What is going to happen in the program that is expected to make a difference? How are program goals supposed to be attained? What theory do program staff hold about what they have to do in order to accomplish the results they want?"

A manageable focus for this agency, in the author's opinion, means choosing one of the three implementation emphases described. And in fact, two of the choices, program effort and treatment specification, do not appear to be highly useful targets for evaluation. Much is already known about the CSO Program effort (effort statistics are gathered monthly). And effort information provides little understanding of how the program functions, of why things happen the way they do. The argument against treatment specification is simply that treat-
ment of the offender is not a major objective of this program. Beyond providing the offender with a meaningful consequence, there is little expectation that long-term behavioural or attitudinal changes will result. Information clarifying the extent to which the intended treatment is operating is therefore not likely to be useful.

Information clarifying the extent to which the intended treatment is operating is therefore not likely to be useful.

Information about program processes, on the other hand, would appear to hold a great deal of potential for program improvement. Process evaluation is, by definition, concerned with the 'hows' and 'whys' of program operations - information essential to making appropriate changes in the program and/or the agency. Furthermore, as was earlier pointed out, there is good reason to believe that program operations may differ significantly from one service delivery unit to the next and from that which was intended. Process evaluation could provide direction for corrective action.

Process evaluation has other advantages for this context. It does not necessarily require sophisticated methodologies and high levels of evaluative expertise; it is an activity with which regional administrators are at least partly familiar (analyses of this nature are a normal management function); it is capable of identifying specific measures for change; finally it can be accomplished in a relatively short period of time without great expense.

The conclusion is that CSO Program processes should be the
Central focus of evaluation. But what processes comprise the CSO Program and what aspects of which processes are likely to be of critical concern to decisionmakers?

The CSO Program has five identifiable processes: (1) program entry, (2) placement and discharge, (3) placement development, (4) program support, and (5) program monitoring. Processes (1), (2) and (3) could be described as operational or direct service components while processes (4) and (5) are administrative or managerial in nature. Each process is briefly described below:

(1) Program Entry. Program entry is that set of activities that begins when the offender first comes to the attention of the Crown Prosecutor and ends with the offender's assignment to Community Service. He may gain entry to the program by diversion or by court process.

(2) Placement and Discharge. This process constitutes the core activity of the program. A placement is chosen for the offender and he works his allotted number of hours. The Community Service Officer supervises the work directly or indirectly and monitors the offender's performance.

(3) Placement Development. In this process are all activities undertaken by the Community Service Officer to develop Community Service placements. Activities would include discussions with community agencies and unions, public speaking to community groups, program promotion through the local media and contacts with the private citizens.

(4) Program Support. Program Support incorporates all
management and support service responsibilities related to this program. Relevant activities include staff development, goal setting, development and dissemination of policies and procedures, allocation of program resources, consultative services to 'front-line' staff, upper-level liaison with other agencies, provision of promotional materials, and program planning and evaluation.

(5) Program Monitoring. Program Monitoring refers to the ongoing process of gathering, collating and using program statistics as a management tool.

Three of the processes described, Program Entry, Placement Development and Program Support appear to be particularly crucial to program effectiveness. With respect to these processes, those evaluating the CSO Program might address three questions: (1) Is the program being adequately used and is it reaching the intended target population? (2) Is the kind of Community Service being done that which was intended? (3) Are Community Service Officers receiving sufficient support and guidance from the organization to carry out their duties effectively? Data that supports a negative response to these questions lead to more questions of the following nature: (1) Is the intended process functional (note that 'functional' is not being defined in terms of final outcomes in this context)? (2) If not, what alternative mode of operation is being used? Why? (3) Is the alternative process functional? How can it be improved? (4) Do program processes complement each other and collectively function as an integrated whole?
This section has argued that the most utilitarian focus for the CSO Program evaluation is that of program processes. It was further suggested that three of five processes identified - Program Entry, Placement Development and Program Support - may be keys to program effectiveness and deserve decisionmakers' special attention.

The focus proposed is not intended to be the final answer to the problem of what to evaluate in this program. In the utility-focused evaluation decisionmakers must make the final choice. It is they who process the relevant concern, it is they who must define what is useful and it is they who must live with the data collected.

**Methodology**

Having decided on a process focus, the next task is to choose a methodology that will gather the desired information. This section proposes a methodology suitable to a process orientation and makes several suggestions to 'build-in' utility.

There are two basic criteria, it would seem, by which a methodology for any evaluation must be chosen: (1) the methodology must be capable of gathering the information of interest to decisionmakers (in this case information about CSO Program processes), (2) the methodology must be within the agency's time, budgetary and knowledge limitations.

The first criterion addresses the question "What is it about the kind of information being sought, its sources and the purpose of acquiring that information that suggests a particular methodology?" Based on the implementation/process focus proposed
for CSO Program evaluation, four kinds of information would be required: (1) information defining the intended processes, (2) information defining the operating processes, (3) information defining the effectiveness of intended and operating processes and (4) information identifying required changes. This kind of data would come from (1) observations of behaviour, (2) assessments of knowledge and attitudes, (3) documents. By nature, this data will be highly descriptive, subjective and qualitative. Unlike some program outcomes, the essence of human processes cannot be reduced to quantitative terms. One must ask too, "Is the purpose of examining this process to predict some social phenomenon or to understand it?" The focus chosen for CSO Program evaluation would suggest that understanding is the objective, that improvement must be based on a clear grasp of the program through 'verstehen.'

What, then, does this holistic analysis-of-human-interaction type of evaluation suggest about the nature of the required methodology? Certainly, its data gathering mechanism must be flexible, open-ended, minimally structured; it must actively engage the evaluator in 'on-site' discussions with and observations of service providers and program participants; and it must rely heavily on the interview and observation skills of the interviewer.

Applying the second criteria to the study context completes the image of the required methodology. Evaluation resources in the Vancouver Region will be limited. In a social
action setting, time is perenially in short supply. Many decisions must be made in the time-frame determined by the annual budget. Evaluative expertise in the region is equally limited. This is the agency that is seriously addressing the need for evaluation for the first time. Unless a formally trained and experienced evaluator is brought in from outside the agency (a strong trend in the Branch to promote from 'within' suggests this is unlikely) a highly sophisticated methodology would seem inappropriate.

A Utility-focused methodology in this context, therefore, will (1) be descriptive and qualitative in nature,(2) be capable of gathering the data in a relatively short period of time (generally speaking allowing one month for data collection and three months to plan and carry out the entire evaluation seems reasonable. Lengthy evaluations risk losing the interest and participation of decisionmakers and may reach a point of diminishing returns), (3) be capable of implementation by an individual or individuals with minimal knowledge of evaluation theory and practice.

These arguments lead the author to propose a simple case study design. The evaluator would gather data at one point in time by visiting selected sampling sites (service delivery units) in the region. Interviews would be undertaken with key service providers, observations made and office documents related to program processes reviewed.

Several suggestions are put forward to help ensure a high-utility effort: (1) check that staff agree with the
methodology chosen and inform them about how the information will be used, (2) establish standards of judgment prior to data collection and avoid attempting to quantify unquantifiable performance indicators, (3) protect the confidentiality of respondents by assigning numbers to names and locations, (4) whenever possible, ensure verbal statements are cross-referenced with observations of behaviour and/or documented action, (5) field test selected measures for gaps and ambiguities prior to data collection (note that the terms standard of judgment, performance indicator and measure mean different things. A performance indicator is a key variable that helps to explain the phenomenon studied; a measure is the device by which the presence of the performance indicator is detected; and the standard of judgment is a statement about the desired or expected state).

An Evaluation Process

The structural model elements just proposed and many of the Utility Principles developed in Chapter II can now be drawn together to create an evaluation process for the CSO Program. In line with the major premise of this thesis, the process described calls for participation by program decision-makers and information users throughout the evaluation. The process proposed assumes the existence of a Task Force, an Advisory Group, an External Consultant, a Regional Planner/Evaluator and a Research Assistant as suggested earlier in this chapter. For descriptive purposes, the process is divided into three parts — the evaluation plan, data collection and
analysis, and dissemination of the results. Only the major steps are noted. Although the steps are listed sequentially, it is expected that the process would be highly iterative in practice.

**Developing the Evaluation Plan**

(1) Task Force identifies purpose of evaluation and isolates several promising foci.

(2) Task Force tests foci against Utility Checklist; the focus with the highest net utility value is selected.

(3) Task Force identifies performance indicators, measures and standards of judgment, and develops a meaningful format for aggregating data.

(4) Evaluator refines (2) and (3) and develops a detailed methodology based on guidelines set by Task Force.

(5) Task Force scrutinizes methodology for (a) capacity to obtain required information, (b) capacity to be implemented with resources available.

(6) Evaluator develops a work schedule and reviews with Task Force.

(7) Evaluator checks evaluation plan for integrity and puts the plan in writing.

(8) Plan is submitted to Advisory Group and External Consultant for comment; modifications are made as required.

(9) Task Force personally presents plan to Regional Management Committee for discussion and approval.
Collecting and Analyzing the Data

(10) Evaluator field tests measures and makes minor modifications as required.

(11) Evaluator and Research Assistant gather data at chosen sampling sites.

(12) Data is collated after each district is sampled. Collated data is made available to Task Force and District Directors as soon as possible.

(13) Task Force decisionmakers and evaluator interpret data separately, then integrate positions and formulate recommendations for action.

Reporting the Findings

(14) Evaluator prepares preliminary report including recommendations and an implementation plan and presents to Task Force for approval.

(15) Preliminary report is distributed for review and comment to Regional Management Committee, Advisory Group, External Consultant and all staff.

(16) Task Force members personally present report to District Management Committees, Community Service Officers and Regional Management Committee.

(17) Regional Management Committee gives conditional or unconditional approval to preliminary report and to the extent possible takes any required action on evaluation findings.

(18) Evaluator writes final report based on feedback from all sources and presents to Task Force for approval.
(19) Final report (bearing Task Force signatures and acknowledging consultants and advisors) is approved by Regional Management Committee and distributed to Region and Branch staff as well as to courts and Crown Prosecutors. Remaining tasks to implement program improvements are delegated.

(20) Task Force evaluates the evaluation effort with External Consultant and required changes are noted.

Summary

This chapter represents one attempt to create an evaluation model with high-utility potential. Certainly, it is not the only form that a utility-focused evaluation model could have taken in this context. Indeed, had decisionmakers from the B.C. Corrections Branch actually been involved in the planning of this model, it may have taken a decidedly different shape. Nevertheless, the model presented serves the purpose of demonstrating a number of the Utility Principles proposed. Its notable characteristics include: (1) a specific purpose and focus based (in practice) on the information needs of decisionmakers, (2) the involvement of decisionmakers who have the most critical information needs of the agency/program, (3) a team of individuals selected from within and outside the agency to plan and undertake the evaluation, (4) a methodology chosen for its acceptability to decisionmakers, capacity to gather the desired information and compatibility to the agency's resource base, (5) a written evaluation plan based on decisionmaker input and approval, (6) decisionmaker participation in data analysis and interpretation, (7) presentation of preliminary findings
to decisionmakers, (8) decisionmaker participation in the dissemination of results, (9) an evaluation 'post mortem.' The key to utility-focused evaluation lies in the careful matching of model elements to the human, financial, geographical and programmatic variables of the evaluation context. In particular, the model elements must be in keeping with decisionmakers' perceptions of utility.
CHAPTER VI

UTILITY-FOCUSED EVALUATION

In this final chapter, the usefulness of utility-focused evaluation itself is addressed. Discussion centres on its fundamental element - decisionmaker participation. Organizations in which the model is likely to be most effective are identified; an argument is advanced to support the labour intensive nature of utility-focused evaluation; finally, the model is viewed as a vehicle for more effective human relations in the organization.

Critical Assumptions of the Utility Model

A fundamental premise of the utility model developed is that decisionmakers must participate in the evaluation effort. But the capacity of the organization to participate is based on several assumptions - assumptions which may not apply to all organizations. Participative evaluation assumes, for example, that (1) staff are willing to participate in evaluation; that there is an atmosphere of trust, cooperation and information sharing in the organization, (2) job descriptions are sufficiently flexible to permit a collaborative effort and (3) relevant decisionmakers are in sufficient proximity to each other to make a participative approach to evaluation feasible.
Clearly, these assumptions will hold true in some organizations more than in others. Those organizations that fit the assumptions could be expected to adopt the utility model with ease and gain significant benefit from it; for other organizations, the obstacles to participation may be so great as to preclude the use of the utility model. The question, then, is which organizations are particularly suited to the utility model and which are not?

Suitable Applications of the Utility Model

The author's belief is that the utility model is better suited to (1) decentralized organizations as opposed to those that are centralized and (2) small rather than large organizations (or small components of large organizations). Decentralized agencies are likely to have broadly-based participative decision-making structures in place. It is likely that extensive information sharing is routine in such organizations. For staff in these agencies, engaging in participative evaluation would merely be a new application of a familiar exercise. But for staff in highly centralized, hierarchical agencies, participative evaluation may be viewed with reticence and alarm. Those used to autocratic decisionmaking and minimal information sharing may not be able to adjust to the open, intensely interactive approach required by the utility model. Today, of course, many organizations (including the British Columbia Corrections Branch) have changed to a decentralized decisionmaking structure. Those
that remain centralized (in practice at least) tend to be large institutions - hospitals for the medically and mentally ill, penitentiaries, the armed forces and the police. Utility-focused evaluation in these contexts may be a difficult (although by no means impossible) undertaking.

There is a clear message here also for those that would apply the utility model to other programs in the B.C. Corrections Branch. The model is more likely to get results with community-based programs than with institution-based programs. Staff associated with the former have had a relatively long exposure to participative decisionmaking and in all probability, practice participative decisionmaking to a greater extent than their institution-based counterparts. Paramilitary organizations, such as prisons, can be expected to be very resistive to change.

In sum, where adoption of the utility model obliges staff to make significant changes in the way in which they normally function, the likelihood that it will be effectively used is minimal; where only minor changes in attitude and behaviour are required to accommodate the model, the potential for utility-focused evaluation is greater.

Secondly, small organizations (or portions of an organization) confined to a small geographical area are more likely users of the utility model than large, extensive organizations. Utility-focused evaluation assumes that key decision-makers will be in close, physical proximity to one another to permit intensive interaction. It further assumes the existence
of effective working relationships among those involved in the evaluation effort. Both are more likely to occur in the small agency where relevant decisionmakers are familiar with each other and where their physical proximity permits frequent interactions. One would surmise, for example, that the geographically small Vancouver Region of the B.C. Corrections Branch is more amenable to the utility model than the geographically extensive Northern Region which services over half the province. By the same reasoning, one would expect the utility model to have greater effectiveness at the district and local levels of the Corrections Branch than at the regional level (provided evaluative expertise is available). As the geographical distance among those engaged in evaluation decreases, the opportunities for greater participation increase.

Expanding the example, attempting to implement the utility model at the Branch level (to make summative decisions about a province-wide program, for example) is likely to be less successful than at lower levels in the organization. Key program decisionmakers (the Regional Directors of Corrections) are dispersed throughout the province, meeting only occasionnally to effect management decisions. Ongoing interaction among those key decisionmakers does not seem feasible. A modified form of the utility model could be implemented but generally speaking, the model is likely to be most effective when applied to organizational structures no larger than regions found in the B.C. Corrections Branch (and preferably smaller) and when applied to organizations/programs
which service a relatively small geographical area.

Utility-Focused Evaluation - Is it Realistic?

Without doubt, the most controversial aspect of the utility model is the time it demands of those involved. Skeptics would argue that asking already overworked decisionmakers to contribute valuable time to evaluation (which is not traditionally a line management function) is simply not realistic. But the fact remains that evaluations that have not included program decisionmakers have, in large measure, failed to influence decisionmaking. Where decisionmakers firmly believe they do not have time to engage in participative evaluation, it may be more appropriate to forego evaluation altogether than run the risk of wasting manpower, time and resources to produce just another unused report.

Evaluation and its parent endeavor, planning, have by and large been perceived as rather distasteful appendages to 'bonafide' administrative activities - something to be engaged in after all other more pressing duties have been duly discharged. The frequent outcome, of course, is that time is never found for evaluation or planning and the agency plods ad infinitum from one crisis to the next. The author argues strenuously that if resources are to be efficiently allocated in the public sector, administrators must extract themselves from the 'catch-22' thinking which prevents them from making a commitment to evaluation, from making more
informed decisions. Plainly and simply, they must arrange their priorities to find the time to participate in evaluation. If they do not, it is reasonable to assume that ill-informed program decisions will be the rule, not the exception.

The second point to make is that there is no hard and fast rule governing how much or how little decisionmakers should participate in evaluation. There exists, presumably, a minimal level of participation below which utility might be seriously affected. Above that line there will be some room for varying the amount of participation to fit the time schedules of those involved.

Finally, there is no reason to believe that evaluation cannot be highly participative yet not be excessively time-consuming. Whether it is or not will depend on how well those party to the evaluation use their time. Time can be kept to a minimum if (1) those involved are task-oriented, (2) meetings are well-structured and their purposes are established ahead of time, (3) the evaluator can provide strong guidance to decisionmakers by identifying decision options and commenting on their feasibility, (4) participants take advantage of normal meeting schedules to discuss the evaluation.

A Parting Word

The thrust of this thesis has been to develop and demonstrate a method to gather useful information for program decision-
makers. But beneath that purpose there lies a potential of another kind - a payoff in human relations. Asking staff to participate in evaluation is a way of recognizing and utilizing the value of the human beings that comprise the organization. It is an opportunity to develop and strengthen a team approach to organization problem-solving. It is an expression of trust, a vote of confidence from staff to fellow staff. It says "We believe in the human potential of this agency; we believe that staff at all levels have a significant contribution to make to the management of this program; we believe that only by collective effort will we find and implement the most effective, efficient means to achieve our goals. We believe in ourselves."
FOOTNOTES

Chapter I


Chapter II


5 Patton, Ibid., p.284.

6 Carol H. Weiss, as cited in Suchman, 1967, Ibid., p.20.


11 Patton, Ibid., p.88.


13 Thompson, Ibid., p.28.

14 Patton, Ibid., p.83.

15 Peter W. Chommie and Joe Hudson, "Evaluation of Outcome and Process," __________.
16 Patton, Ibid., p.154.
17 Thompson, Ibid., p.157.
20 Ibid., p.255. 21 Ibid., p.243. 22 Ibid., p.264.
23 Ibid., p.258. 24 Ibid., p.243. 25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., p.270.
28 Attkisson et al., Ibid., p.62.
30 Caro, Ibid., p.95.
33 Patton, Ibid., p.239.

Chapter III


2 From discussion with Mr. E. W. Harrison, Regional Director of Corrections (Vancouver Region), British Columbia Corrections Branch, Vancouver, B.C.


5 Information provided by the Office of the Vancouver Region, British Columbia Corrections Branch, Ministry of Attorney-General.

6 From discussion with Mr. E. W. Harrison, Regional Director of Corrections (Vancouver Region), British Columbia Corrections Branch, Vancouver, B.C.

7 From discussion with O. E. Hollands, Director, Program Analysis and Evaluation Section, Office of the Commissioner, British Columbia Corrections Branch, Victoria, B.C.

8 From discussion with G. Muirhead, Acting Director, Operations and Management Information Section, Office of the Commissioner, British Columbia Corrections Branch, Victoria, B.C.

9 From discussion with E. W. Harrison, Regional Director of Corrections (Vancouver Region), British Columbia Corrections Branch, Vancouver, B.C.

10 From information issued by the Criminology Research Centre, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C., April, 1979.

Chapter IV


2 Ministry of Attorney-General, British Columbia Corrections Branch (Vancouver Region), Minutes of the Regional Management Committee Meeting, April 23, 1979, Vancouver, B.C., April, 1979.

From the Operations and Management Information Section, Office of the Commissioner, British Columbia Corrections Branch, Victoria, B.C.

Chapter V


3From discussion with E. W. Harrison, Regional Director of Corrections (Vancouver Region), British Columbia Corrections Branch, Vancouver, B.C.


5Patton, Ibid., p.166.


8Suchman, Ibid., p.61.

9Patton, Ibid., p.166.

10Ibid., p.167.

11Opinion expressed by B. Robinson, Commissioner of Corrections, B.C. Corrections Branch, on a CBC Radio broadcast concerning the Community Service Order Program (Fall, 1979).


