How you Measure Matters: Values-Guided Technical Assistance Evaluation Toolkit

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Evaluation Plus
MAKING CHANGE POSSIBLE

INTRODUCTION

The Resource Sharing Project (RSP) is a national project of sexual-violence related services and resources. Its core services are training and technical assistance to end sexual violence and support survivors. In 2018, RSP co-created with an evaluation partner a toolkit for evaluating technical assistance and training. The impetus for creating the toolkit was *to align RSP values with evaluation practices to help inform and capture the impact of their work and the work of coalitions*. Along the way, we learned that the need was not simply building capacity to select, adapt, and effectively use evaluation tools for continuous improvement, but to repair and restore RSP partners and coalition members confidence in evaluators and evaluation as partners and allies in ending sexual violence. In addition to building evaluation capacity, this project took on the intention to:

- gather meaningful information about coalitions perspectives and experiences with providing or receiving technical assistance delivered through a lens of survivor-centered, trauma-informed and anti-oppressive lenses.
- connect evaluators and non-evaluators working inside of sexual violence and support services and advocacy with evaluation frameworks that are inclusive and participatory.
- build capacity to access and understand the core principles of evaluation to allow RSP members to engage with evaluators that share their passion for healing
- offer positive and supportive experiences with evaluation.

WAYS OF KNOWING

The toolkit evolved over a 12-month iterative process that included:

➢ **Literature reviews** focused on:
- Principles & practices around adult learning, survivor-centered, trauma-informed and anti-oppression practices
- Participatory & inclusive approaches to data collection
- Meaningful Evaluation of Technical Assistance

➢ **Focus Groups** with RSP coalition members to explore:
- Perspectives on evaluation
- Experiences as a recipient of technical assistance through RSP
- Experiences as technical assistance provider
- How they wanted to tell the story of their work

➢ **Iterative feedback cycles** with *RSP Project Partners* and the *RSP Communities of Color Leadership Cohort* that included:
- Discussions on how to apply learning from literature reviews and focus groups to RSP practice & toolkit development
- Review of web-based toolkits to learn about what features were attractive & easy to use
- Review of toolkits aligned with values framing to look at language and style of communication
- Review and approval processes for each module of the new toolkit

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DISCOVERIES

The following understandings emerged from the iterative learning process to inform the development of the toolkit.
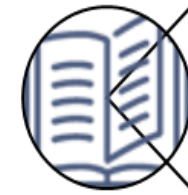
1. While Kirkpatrick's TA[1] model can inform much about how RSP can evaluate technical assistance it does not go far enough. Evaluation of RSP should account for two additional levels of learning (see Figure 1).
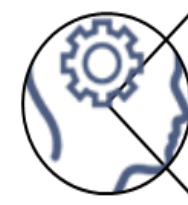
Figure 1: TA Framework for Evaluation

Kirkpatrick's TA Model

Reaction: understanding the perspectives on how TA delivered (e.g. satisfaction, quality)

Learning: understanding what skills and knowledge were gained

Behavior: determining whether and how what was learned was applied

Results: exploring the connections between changes in behavior and program outcomes

Environment: understanding connections between learning environment & healing

Relationships: understanding the dynamics that exist between learner & delivery of TA

RSP Additions to Model

2. For evaluation to play a meaningful role in supporting coalitions working with survivors, it needs to:

- Credit the long-term nature of the work
- Capture changes at the policy and systems level
- Honor the importance of trust and relationship building
- Track policy changes
- Utilize language and approaches that restore power and influence to survivors

3. Coalition staff with responsibility for evaluation seek capacities and tools that:

- Validate experience over standardized instruments with a particular emphasis on storytelling
- Considerations of ethics in evaluation including data collection, communication about findings, data ownership, and data use
- Develop and open the pipeline of evaluation to non-academically trained perspectives, including a clear and direct process for what needs to be done and when so that anyone responsible for evaluation would know what to do and when to do it
- Eliminate pre-determined categorization of identity
- Deeply involve survivors in shaping the evaluation
- Solicit meaningful information but are considered credible, not "mushy"
- Draw on practices that allow coalitions to see how they are doing compared to how others deliver TA (going beyond the field for best practices and lessons learned)
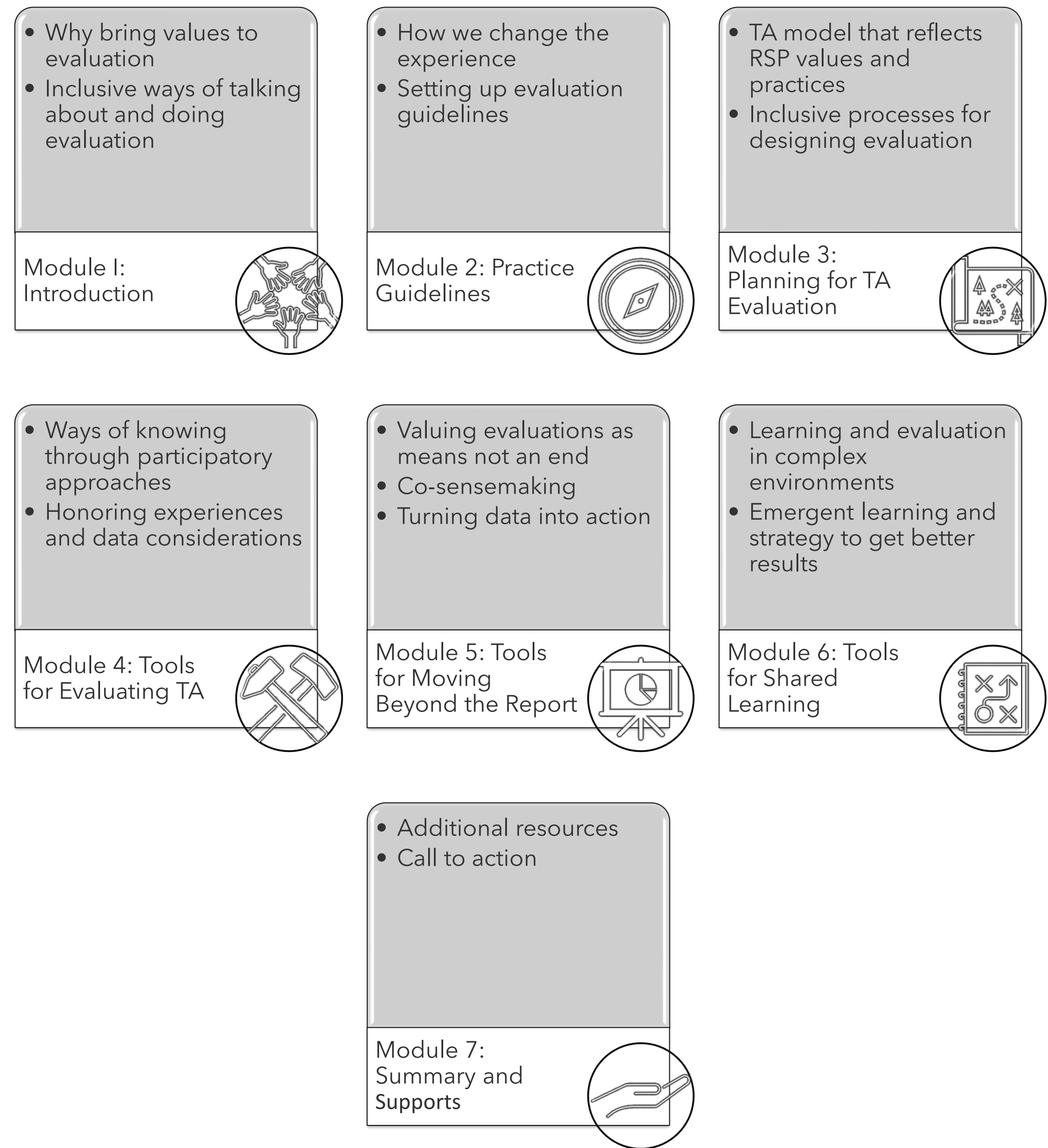- Evaluators willing to show up at the table as allies, earn trust and value multiple types of expertise

1 Evaluating Training and Technical Assistance. http://www.strengtheningnonprofits.org/resources/e-learning/online/evaluatingtrainingandta/Print.aspx

THE RSP EVALUATION TOOLKIT

The final toolkit includes seven modules (Figure 2). To date, the toolkit has been accessed over 2000 times. To expand reach of the toolkit and grow practice, we also offered a series of five webinars with coalition members.

The toolkit, can be found on the Resource Sharing Project website: http://www.resourcesharingproject.org/evaluation-toolkit.

Figure 2: Outline of Evaluation Toolkit

- Why bring values to evaluation
- Inclusive ways of talking about and doing evaluation

Module I: Introduction

- How we change the experience
- Setting up evaluation guidelines

Module 2: Practice Guidelines

- TA model that reflects RSP values and practices
- Inclusive processes for designing evaluation

Module 3: Planning for TA Evaluation

- Ways of knowing through participatory approaches
- Honoring experiences and data considerations

Module 4: Tools for Evaluating TA

- Valuing evaluations as means not an end
- Co-sensemaking
- Turning data into action

Module 5: Tools for Moving Beyond the Report

- Learning and evaluation in complex environments
- Emergent learning and strategy to get better results

Module 6: Tools for Shared Learning

- Additional resources
- Call to action

Module 7: Summary and Supports

CONTINUING THE LEARNING

Technical assistance (TA) is one of the central pillars of partnership between coalitions, local programs, and allies. TA takes on many forms including sharing information and expertise, instruction, skills training, transmission of working knowledge, and coaching. Through its TA, RSP models the values critical to addressing the questions and challenges of our partners, encourages growth and expansion of practices to support survivors, and addresses emerging needs in a changing context.

To align with this practice, evaluators need to evolve their practices and belief systems about evaluation. Even with experience in collaborative and participatory evaluation practices and a commitment to equity, evaluation team needed to navigate issues of trust, language in the field of evaluation that is distancing, and what does *value* in evaluation really mean.

What RSP and its evaluation consultants learned together through this process sparked an interest in learning from others and activating the field around the following questions:

- How can evaluation be used to further promote hope and healing for survivors?
- How can we grow the evaluation field to support a healthier perspective on learning and accountability among non-evaluators?

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