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HOW TO CREATE AN INTERNAL EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR INJURY PREVENTION ORGANIZATIONS

BACKGROUND

The use of external consultants to perform the entire evaluation function on behalf of an injury prevention (IP) organization can be a costly, lengthy and time-consuming process and is not recommended. Our experiences at SMARTRISK and in the Ontario Injury Prevention Resource Centre (OIPRC), have demonstrated that methodologically sound and useful evaluations can be successfully performed using internal evaluation resources including internal evaluation staff and IP program managers and staff. In addition, we have found that our organization's program managers, line staff and support staff can effectively perform many of the evaluation skills needed to conduct an internal evaluation (e.g. database management, literature reviewing, managing projects). Similar experiences have been reported by other IP organizations. Furthermore, program managers and staff can also provide excellent levels of assistance in completing many tasks needed to internally evaluate an IP organization's programs and projects (e.g. development of evaluation plans, creation of program outcome measures, facilitation of group discussions, disseminating evaluation findings).

A SUGGESTED PROCESS FOR CREATING AN INTERNAL EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

It is recommended that senior managers in the organization take on a leadership role in the development of this important capacity of IP organizations. The process of creating an "Internal Evaluation Capacity Development Plan" in an IP organization can be viewed as a series of related steps or actions that result in the production of a strategic plan for organizational capacity building. The series of actions that we recommend involve a combination of organizational restructuring, staff development and the creation and implementation of new organizational policies. One example of the series of actions is provided by our recently-created, organizational development (OD) planning tool titled, *Internal Evaluation Capacity Development Plan for Injury Prevention Organizations*.

This planning tool is to be completed over time, by the manager who has primary responsibility for managing the IP organization's internal evaluation function or if this position does not exist within the organization yet, by the Executive Director or another senior manager.

The titles of the organization's personnel that appear in the "Person(s) Responsible" column of this planning tool represent our recommendation for the organizational level at which the responsibility for the specific action should reside. In order to ensure that an

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organization develops its' internal evaluation capacity in a timely and efficient manner, it must be absolutely clear to all of the organization's staff that the development of internal evaluation capacity is a priority at the most senior levels of organizational management.

The dates that appear in the column titled, "Time Frames" are simply our suggested guidelines based on the experiences that we have had in the development of our own organizational capacity for internal evaluation. These time frames may not be appropriate for IP organizations with substantially less staff and other internal evaluation resources. The message to be taken from the information on suggested time frames for specific organizational developments is that some actions (e.g. conducting an inventory of the organization's internal evaluation resources) need to occur quite soon in the development process whereas, other actions are expected to take substantially longer to occur (e.g. development of an annual plan for the professional development of the members of the team of internal evaluators).

The first of two internal assessment tasks that need to occur quite quickly, as they set the stage for the remainder of the organizational development steps, is the completion of an inventory of the organization's existing internal evaluation resources. To facilitate the completion of this critical task, a self-assessment tool has been developed. This organizational capacity assessment tool is titled, *Inventory of Existing Internal Evaluation Resources for Injury Prevention Organizations*. This self-assessment tool is intended to be completed by a program manager or senior staff member who has a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the organization's human, IT and financial resources.

The second critical task that needs to be completed before the remainder of the development process can take place is the identification of any gaps that exist in the skill sets of the organization's current complement of human resources. Thirty specific skills that are needed to support an internal evaluation function (e.g. data entry, interviewing ability, report writing) have been identified and an assessment tool has been provided for use in specifying which of the required skill sets are currently available within the organization. By a process of elimination, this assessment tool is also useful in identifying and gaps that exist in the organization's complement of the skills that are required to support an internal evaluation function. This assessment tool is titled, *Inventory of Required Evaluation Skills for the Internal Evaluation Function in an IPO*, and is to be completed by the same manager or senior staff member who completed the assessment tool described in the last paragraph.

The completion of the two organizational capacity assessment tools will result in the documentation of critical baseline data that will identify needed directions for human resource recruitment or development within the organization.

The aforementioned, *Internal Evaluation Capacity Development Plan for Injury Prevention Organizations*, is comprised of a total of fourteen other recommended tasks or actions that will contribute to the development of the organizational capacity to perform the internal evaluation function. The remainder of the tasks are self-explanatory.

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If this systematic process of organizational capacity building is followed, an IP organization will quickly observe gains in its' internal evaluation capability. As noted, earlier, the development of this important organizational capacity will result in reduced costs for evaluation, the performance of evaluations that more closely reflect the needs of program stakeholders, improvements in the timeliness of obtaining evaluation results and the production of evaluation data that that injury prevention program personnel will quickly utilize for program and project development.