

Evaluative mindsets: How do we support NGOs to engage in evaluative thinking and practice?

Workshop on NGO Developments, 24 May 2011

Telling our stories, sharing our practice, and growing our sector

Kate Mckegg



Kinnect
group

Capital Research • Judy Oakden Consultancy
Research Evaluation Consultancy • The Knowledge Institute
Julian King and Associates Limited

Agenda

- A brief introduction
- Building evaluative capacity (ECB) – a framework
- Evaluation, evaluative thinking and practice in organisations
- Shifting practice - the critical ‘values’ step
- Introducing an evaluative tool

Building evaluative capacity

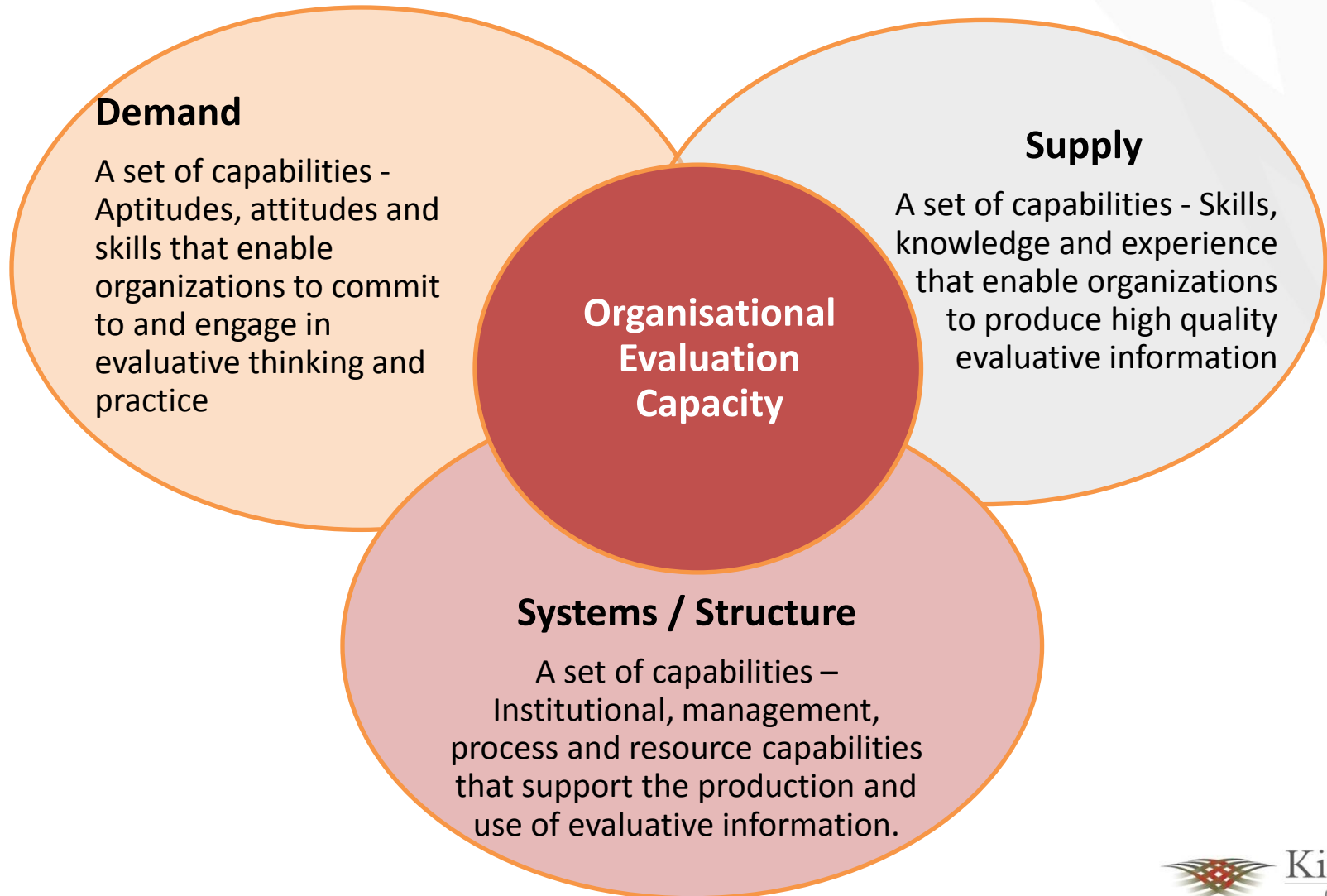
- The importance of evaluative capacity as a contributor to effectiveness is underlined in much public management, philanthropic, organisational development and evaluation literature

“The intentional work to continuously create and sustain organizational processes that make quality evaluation and its uses routine” (Stockdill, Baizerman and Compton, 2003)

Capacity / Capability

- Capacity
 - skills, experience and abilities to perform tasks, produce outputs etc
 - ‘...the overall ability of an organisation or system to create public value.’* (Baser and Morgan, 2008)
- Capability – organisational capacity is made up of a set of capabilities that support, sustain and nurture the capacity of organisations to create value, or to think and practice evaluatively (Williams, 2010)

Linking Evaluation Capacity and Capability



Demand	Supply	Systems / Structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership, taking responsibility for learning and implementation of lessons learned • Transparency i.e., being prepared to expose ideas and practices to tough feedback • Inquiry, questioning and open mindedness • Openness to taking risks, change and experimentation • Perseverance to pursue inquiry to increase understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluative skills and competencies among personnel in the organisation • Evaluation experience among personnel within the organisation • The extent of individual and collective commissioning, doing and using evaluation and formal evaluative information within the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional policies and structures that drive and support evaluative functions within the organisation e.g., having an outcome framework • Management structures that exist to support evaluative systems • The quality, extent and integration of existing organisational monitoring, IT, information systems, databases and reporting functions • Resource available and applied in an organisation to support, the input, reporting and use of evaluative

Demand

- **The capability to commit and engage in evaluation** – it's about organizational motivation or ownership, volition or choice. It has a lot to do with attitude, aptitude and perception; it's about collective drive, confidence and ambition
 - The literature (and my experience) suggests it is the critical capability that energizes all the others
- “...as it happened, motivation had the most impact on the agency's progress” (Ann Dykman, 2002)*

However, this capability seems least well understood

“the interconnections between ownership, human motivation, commitment and capacity development are still only dimly understood...” (Baser and Morgan, 2008, p59)

- And some have even argued that the constraints of our understanding about this capability helps explain why evaluation has been the “Cinderella of public sector reform” (Hauge, 1998).

Linking demand, supply and systems/structure is critical

- Demand is critical
- The other two dimensions of supply and systems / structure are strongly interconnected and reinforcing of demand
- Without sufficient skills, knowledge and experience in the organisation, and supporting policies, structures and information systems, evaluative thinking and practice will also struggle to get off the ground

Some identified barriers to motivation / evaluative demand in the public sector

- Little interest in effectiveness at parliamentary level and therefore little use of performance information
- Few incentives and rewards for Chief Executive performance based on performance information; the review process does not currently systematically use evaluative information
- Fear of political fallout and of public criticism have been inhibiting factors
- Culture of control and accountability that has focused attention on the management and measurement of outputs – single loop learning
- Fuzzy performance orientation in the public sector

Some barriers identified in the community sector

- Resource available to support an evaluation function
- Lack of skills and expertise
- Limited technology to support evaluation
- Political tensions between boards and management
- Staff resistance
- Lack of support from funders

So far, although some positives...more common is a litany of disappointing sector experiences

- Outcome frameworks that promise much, show early promise, cost heaps, become too complicated and so end up on shelves – and everyone goes back to what they were doing before...
- Databases and IT systems that cost a lot, that hold a lot of data, but no-one but the data analyst uses or values them.... ‘they just don’t reflect what we do’
- Rafts of indicators that still don’t seem to tackle the really important quality questions and answers
- Reports that describe what’s happening, often in complex ways, people get lost in the detail, and then often offer sweeping conclusions that just don’t ‘gel’ leaving everyone none the wiser about what to do next

So, the question then is....
How do we join up these aspects of
evaluative capacity and improve our
chances of improving evaluative
thinking and practice in NGOs?

What is evaluation?

It is the systematic determination of the **quality, value or importance** of something (project, initiative, program, organisation etc) *in order to take action*



It is underpinned by the collection of information / evidence about the inputs, activities and outcomes of something i.e., a project, program, initiative or activity

Its key purposes are to determine **how well** something is doing or was done, **what its value** is or was, and if it is **worth doing** more of it

What makes evaluation different?

- The 'values' part
- E- **valu** - **ation** has three components

Descriptive facts + **values** + **evaluative**
(what so) **conclusions and action**
(so what?)

- Values get us from what so to so what

See E. Jane Davidson, *Evaluation Methodology Basics, The Nuts and Bolts of Sound Evaluation*, Sage, 2005

Values in evaluation?

On what basis will we decide or demonstrate to others that something we are doing is **high quality, valuable, worth doing, or important to pursue?**

And on what basis will we determine 'how good is good' ?

Where will we get the **criteria** to make the judgments we need to make?

It is **values** that we look to help us make these judgments. When ever we remark or comment on how good something was, or how well someone did something, we are drawing on our values to make **evaluative judgments** about the **quality** and **value** of things.

Evaluative thinking and practice

Requires us:

- to get to the heart of what quality and value mean for people, from different worldviews and perspectives about the outcomes that matter, and the processes that contribute to these outcomes
- to reflect and incorporate these ‘values’ in the criteria that is used to judge how ‘good’ our services, and our outcomes are.

Leaping the critical 'values' step

(E.J. Davidson, 2010)



Descriptive data /
evidence (what's so?)



VALUES
(definitions of
quality and
value)



Evaluative
Conclusions (so
what?)

Removes any transparency related to judgments of quality and value – which can then be perceived as disempowering, demotivating, disregarding of what's important

The 'values' step must be explicit

A transparent 'values' step allows:

- Genuine evaluative conversations (with more voices at the table) about what 'success' looks like
- The definitions of 'success' and their application are more easily challenged – and therefore improved (E.J Davidson, 2010)

Visible



When the 'values' step is transparent and explicit, then it is more likely to expect:

- Genuine evaluative conversations (with more voices at the table) about
 - what 'success' looks like
 - what constitutes 'good' programme, organisational or sector delivery and outcomes => more likely to realise it

The 'values' step

- Creates motivation to engage with data
- Creates ownership of results
- Creates buy in to findings
- It changes people's attitudes to judgment
- It creates a collective drive and confidence to become data informed about quality, value and performance

Evaluative rubrics - a methodological approach

- Make the 'values' step transparent and explicit
- A broad-brush way of transparently defining what excellent, good, (etc) quality, value or performance would look like in practice
- Allow interpretation of qualitative, quantitative and mixed method data – *as a set*

(E.J. Davidson, 2010)

General guide for deciding how 'good' performance is on key evaluative questions

Performance Descriptors for Key Evaluation Questions	
Excellent	Performance is clearly very strong or exemplary in relation to the question. Any gaps or weaknesses are not significant and are managed effectively.
Very Good	Performance is generally strong in relation to the question. No significant gaps or weaknesses, and less significant gaps or weaknesses are mostly managed effectively.
Good	Performance is reasonable in relation to the question. A few gaps or weaknesses, but none that are considered serious
Adequate	Performance is inconsistent in relation to the question. Some gaps or weaknesses. Meets minimum expectations/ requirements as far as can be determined.
Poor	Performance is unacceptably weak in relation to the question. Does not meet minimum expectations/requirements.
Insufficient evidence	Evidence unavailable or of insufficient quality to determine performance.

An everyday example:

How **valuable** was the last consultation about my son's aspergers?

- My criteria (values) for judging the quality and value of a consultation:
 - The extent to which I have confidence that GPs and specialists are working collaboratively around his care
 - The extent to which I have a clear idea of my son's progress and future options
 - The extent to which Patrick is respected and included in the consultation
 - The extent to which GPs and specialists demonstrate an interest in Patrick's wider life and context
 - The amount of stress involved in seeing specialists and GPs



If the consultation was excellent?

- I would have total confidence that my GP and the specialists were working together, and had full and shared knowledge of Patrick's condition and his developmental progress.
- I would leave the consultation with a thorough understanding of son's progress and feel confident that there were practical future options that I and my family can use and are relevant to us to support his development.
- I would feel that Patrick was being respected and included by everyone, that his feelings and point of view would be taken seriously
- Being able to see the key specialists was a straightforward experience.

My criteria and the data

Evaluative Criteria	The Data	Importance ranking
The extent to which I have confidence GPs and specialists are working collaboratively around his care	The appointment system certainly didn't indicate that there was any formal collaboration, it was clear that prior to the appointment, there had been no contact between specialists, although once together, everyone worked well	1
The extent to which I have a clear idea of my son's progress and future options	The discussion was very productive and it was agreed that using the data from the recent cognitive testing, as well as other best practice, guidelines for Patrick's teachers would be developed	2
The extent to which Patrick is respected and included in the consultation	Patrick was engaged and talkative with the group. The GPs and specialists encouraged him to lead discussion and he reported that he enjoyed the experience	3
The extent to which GPs and specialists demonstrate an interest in Patrick's wider life and context	The group were very supportive of finding ways to translate clinical and psychological findings into everyday language for teachers.	4
The amount of stress involved in seeing specialists and GPs	This has not changed since we have been in the system. This requires my organisation for the consultation to work effectively	5

What was the value / how good was the appointment ?

Overall = Pretty Good

Criteria	Awful	Mediocre	OK	Pretty Good	Great	
The extent to which I have confidence GPs and specialists are working collaboratively around his care						Extremely Important
The extent to which I have a clear idea of my son's progress and future options						Very important
The extent to which Patrick is respected and included in the consultation						Important
The extent to which GPs and specialists demonstrate an interest in Patrick's wider life and context						Somewhat important
The amount of stress involved in seeing specialists and GPs						Not so important

Evaluative mindsets

- Under-recognized aspect of change or capacity development
- Decisions by those in organisations to engage and commit are not taken in a vacuum – beliefs, values and assumptions shape decisions and behaviours
- The values step (using rubrics methodology):
 - Increases transparency of judgment, debate and discussion about the quality and value of services and outcomes
 - Promotes open discussion about what matters
 - Taps into people's motivation to engage in inquiry at all levels of an organisation

An example at NGO level -outcomes that matter

A Recovery Matrix

Personal

Hope for the future

Quality of life

Spirituality / Personal Beliefs

Clinical

Daily living skills

Mental Health

Physical Health

Cultural

Culture

Relationships (whānau)

Autonomy

Social

Housing and accommodation

Money and finances

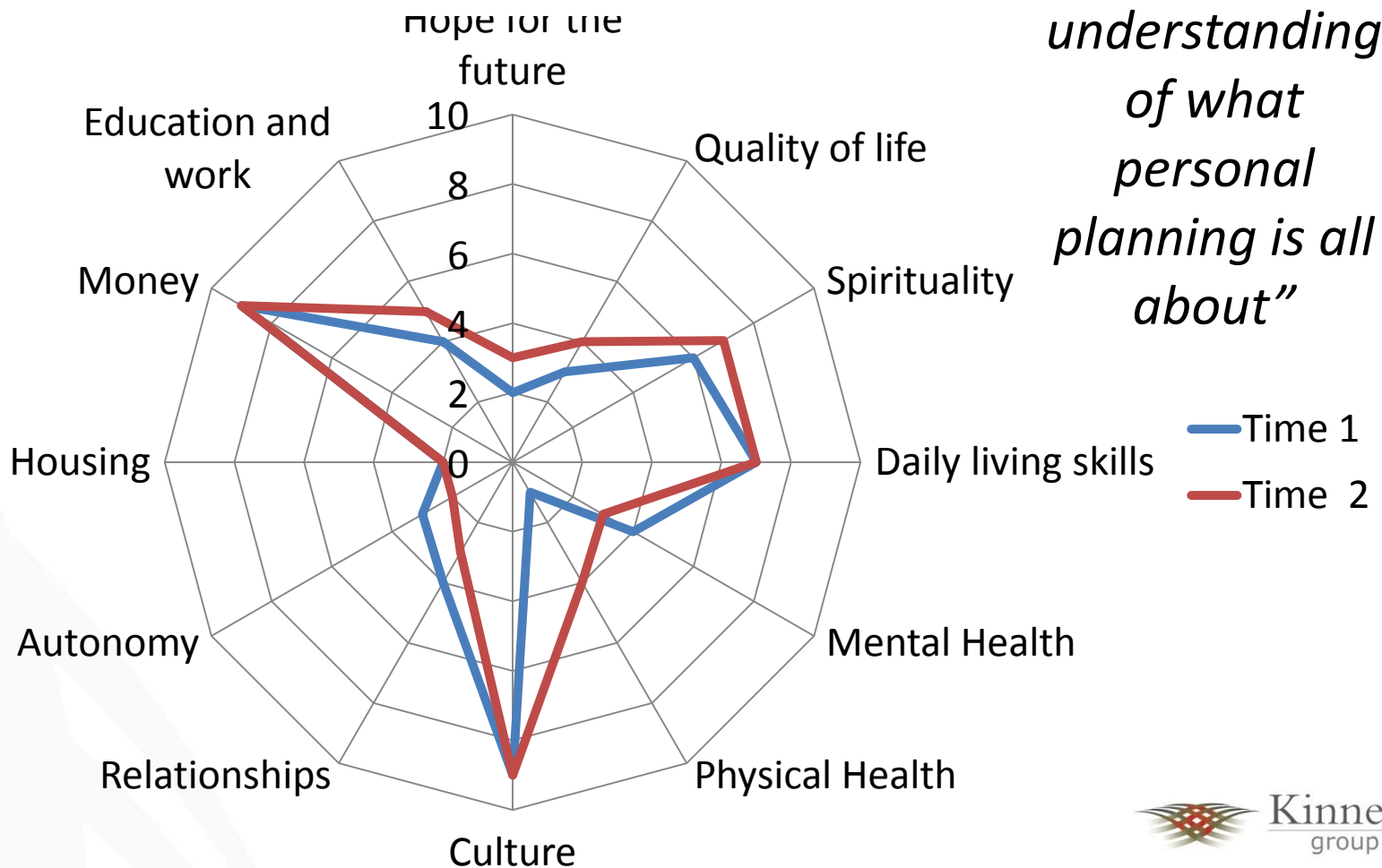
Education, training and work (paid and unpaid)

Rubric example: Housing and accommodation

Crisis	At Risk	Stable / supported	Self-sufficient	Thriving
I am homeless, or about to be evicted: my personal safety is at risk and I am unsafe to remain at home. I am unable to continue living either on my own or with the people I live with. The situation is intolerable	I am at risk of eviction, either because of my actions or because I can not afford the rent. I feel unsafe in my home. My house is in a state of disrepair. I lack some furnishings which I would like. I would like to change my living arrangements.	My housing is okay – it is warm, dry and affordable. I am safe in my home and have essential furnishings. Some of the time I am ok with who I live with but would like things to be different in the future	I am happy with my housing. My home is comfortable, safe and affordable and furnished to my liking. I am happy with my living arrangements – I like living by myself, with family or housemates.	I am settled and happy in the house of my choice, at this time. It is comfortable, safe and affordable and furnished to my liking. I really enjoy living by myself, with family or with housemates.

A graph of change – used for understanding the recovery journey

“Expanded our understanding of what personal planning is all about”



Another service level example – what does ‘good’ peer support look like in practice?

See www.wellink.org.nz/KWWreports20102402.htm

The criteria developed from literature and together with the organisation included:

- Effective and appropriate client (guest) engagement
- Peer support workers are able to provide a climate and context which assists guest recovery
- Peer support workers have the skills and attitudes to assist guest recovery
- Effective and appropriate management of peer support teamwork

(Extra detail in the worksheet handout)

Rubrics allowed for transparent synthesis of quantitative and qualitative data

Rating	Quantitative data	Qualitative data
Excellent: (Always)	90% or more agree with statement	Clear example of exemplary performance or best practice in this domain: no weaknesses
Very good: (Almost Always)	80% - 90% agree with statement	Very good to excellent performance on virtually all aspects; storing overall but not exemplary; no weaknesses of any real consequence
Good: (Mostly, with some exceptions)	60% - 80% agree with statement and no more than 15% disagree	Reasonably good performance overall; might have a few slight weaknesses but nothing serious.
Adequate: (Sometimes, with quite a few exceptions)	40% - 60% agree with and no more than 15% disagree	Fair performance, some serious, but non fatal weaknesses on a few aspects
Poor: Never (or occasionally with clear weaknesses evident)	Less than 40% or more agree with statement	Clear evidence of unsatisfactory functioning; serious weaknesses across the board on crucial aspects

Snapshot of the quality of the peer support service

	Ratings				
	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very good	Excellent
Overall rating					
Effective and appropriate client (guest) engagement					
Peer workers are able to provide a climate and context which assists guest recovery					
Peer workers have the skills and attitudes to assist guest recovery					
Effective and appropriate management of peer support teamwork					

Overall evaluative conclusion

“...the peer support approach implemented ...provided an exciting example of a new way to deliver respite services to those who were acutely unwell to assist their recovery. The service shows great potential to affect significant and lasting change in guests for the following reasons:

- Generally strong on peer skills, relationship building and creating a climate of trust and mutual support focused on recovery
- Some management and supervision weaknesses although these were being actively addressed by the organisation”

Indicators, measures and data are *necessary but not sufficient* for answering evaluative questions *(E.J. Davidson, 2010)*

Evaluation Question

How well did we implement this service or program?

And the answer is...?

NOT!!

There were X number of new clients, X % received pre admission community care, X % received community based services. Interviews with users indicated that many were satisfied with the service....

Evaluative rubrics (E.J. Davidson, 2010)

- Cover substantial ground of any key domain
- Able to include those harder to measure intangibles

Thinking more broadly about indicators

SMART

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic

Time based

SPICED

Subjective (using judgment and expertise)

Participatory

Interpreted and communicable

Cross checked and compared

Empowering

Diverse and disaggregated

Evaluative rubrics *(E.J. Davidson)*

- Versatile – they work well for:
 - swift and clean or in-depth analysis
 - qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods
- Serious about values - perfect for ensuring consumers, community, cultural & organisational values/aspirations incorporated
- Implementing them helps build shared understanding of what constitutes ‘effectiveness’ or ‘goodness’
- Creates energy and commitment for engaging with data
- Identify multiple levels of performance and progress, on many dimensions
- Can be used at all levels of the system

Thank you

Contact:

Kate McKegg

The Knowledge Institute Ltd

a member of

The Kinnect Group

www.kinnect.co.nz

kate@kinnect.co.nz

See also www.realevaluation.com