



**CDC Evaluation Coffee Break:  
Cultural Competence in Evaluation**



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Welcome to today's Coffee Break presented by the Evaluation and Program Effectiveness Team in the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Derrick Gervin is from CDC's Division for Heart Diseases and Stroke Prevention and is a behavioral health scientist on the Evaluation and Program Effectiveness Team. My name is Rachel Davis and I am your moderator for today. I am also a member of the Evaluation Team.

\*Note: Screen magnification settings may affect document appearance.

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## Overview

1. *Provide a definition of cultural competence in evaluation and discuss why it is important.*
2. *Describe the history of cultural competence and the relevance of the American Evaluation Association's public statement.*
3. *Integrate essential practices with the CDC framework for evaluation in public health.*



Before we begin, I'd like to provide a brief overview of today's coffee break. Over the next 15 minutes, I will share a definition for cultural competence in evaluation and discuss why this topic is important. I will provide some history regarding cultural competence and the American Evaluation Association's public statement on cultural competence in evaluation. And we will conclude with a discussion on how the CDC framework for evaluation in public health might serve as a starting point for those interested in incorporating cultural competence in their evaluation work.

## *Just So You Know...*

*Today's session is an introduction,  
and not a "how-to" session.*

One word of caution, however, this coffee break presentation is a brief introduction to cultural competence in evaluation and not a "how-to" training. At the end of the presentation I will share some helpful resources for those interested in learning more about cultural competence in evaluation.

## **Cultural Competence is...**

- **“A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.”**

—*Office of Minority Health, DHHS*

What is cultural competence?

The Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health defines cultural competence as “A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.”

It is important to note that culture is not limited to race and ethnicity. Culture includes language, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, and social class, and more generally any group's values, norms and beliefs.

### **Why is it Important?**

- ❑ **Acknowledge and respect different worldviews**
- ❑ **Ensure validity and reliability of findings**
- ❑ **Minimize risks to participants/communities**
- ❑ **Ensure relevant and meaningful findings**

Cultural competence in evaluation is important because it acknowledges and respects different worldviews; it helps to ensure the validity and reliability of findings; it minimizes risks to participants; and it contributes to relevant and meaningful evaluation findings.

## **The Road to Cultural Competence in Evaluation**

- ❑ **Culture and evaluation (Patton, 1985)**
- ❑ **Cross-cultural evaluation (Ginsberg, 1988; Merryfield, 1985)**
- ❑ **Responsive evaluation (Hood, 2001; Stake, 1975)**
- ❑ **Social justice and multicultural validity (Kirkhart, 1995)**
- ❑ **Inclusive evaluation (Mertens, 1999)**
- ❑ **Culturally responsive evaluation (Frierson, Hood, and Hughes, 2002)**
- ❑ **Multicultural evaluation (Hopson, 2003; Kagawa-Singer and others, 2003)**

Because of the complexities of culture, the road to cultural competence in evaluation has taken many turns. Here, I've listed some of the terms that have preceded cultural competence in evaluation. They include cross-cultural evaluation, responsive evaluation, inclusive evaluation and others. These varying terms have resulted in the need to agree on a common term and definition.

## **Cultural Competence in Evaluation Defined**

- **“A systematic, responsive inquiry that is actively cognizant, understanding, and appreciative of the cultural context in which the evaluation takes place...”  
(SenGupta, Hopson, Thompson-Robinson, 2004)**

Here, I provide the following definition for cultural competence in evaluation as, “A systematic, responsive inquiry that is actively cognizant, understanding, and appreciative of the cultural context in which the evaluation takes place.”



## **AEA's Public Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation**

- ❑ **Process of learning, unlearning, and relearning**
- ❑ **Awareness of self**
- ❑ **Defined in relation to a specific context or location**
- ❑ **Ethical obligation**

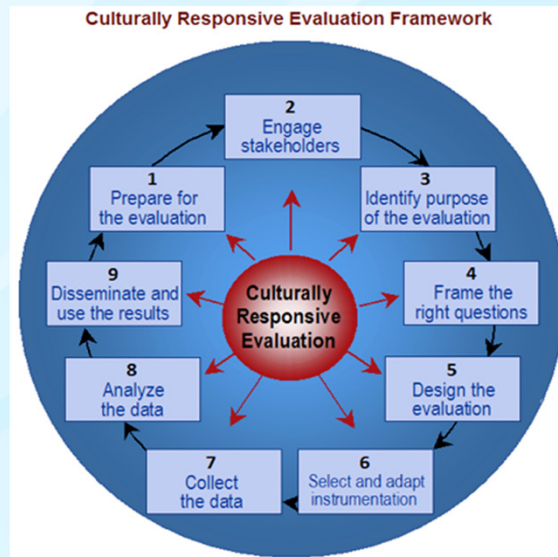
The American Evaluation Association has gone a step further with its public statement. A formal statement on cultural competence in evaluation was adopted by the organization in April 2011, after six years of development. Much like AEA's guiding principles the statement on cultural competence serves as a guide for evaluators and emphasizes the significance of cultural competence in evaluation. Some key components of the statement are:

- “Cultural competence is not a state at which one arrives; rather, it is a process of learning, unlearning, and relearning.”
- “Cultural competence requires awareness of self, reflection on one’s own cultural position, awareness of others’ positions, and the ability to interact genuinely and respectfully with others.”
- “Cultural competence is defined in relation to a specific context or location, such as geography. Competence in one context is no assurance of competence in another.”

The American Evaluation Association also emphasizes the importance of Cultural Competence as an ethical obligation and suggests that, “Evaluators have an ethical obligation to ensure that stakeholders in all aspects of the evaluation process fully understand their rights and inherent risks.” Because AEA stops short of providing guidance on how to engage in culturally competent evaluation work, I’d like to share some existing frameworks and models.

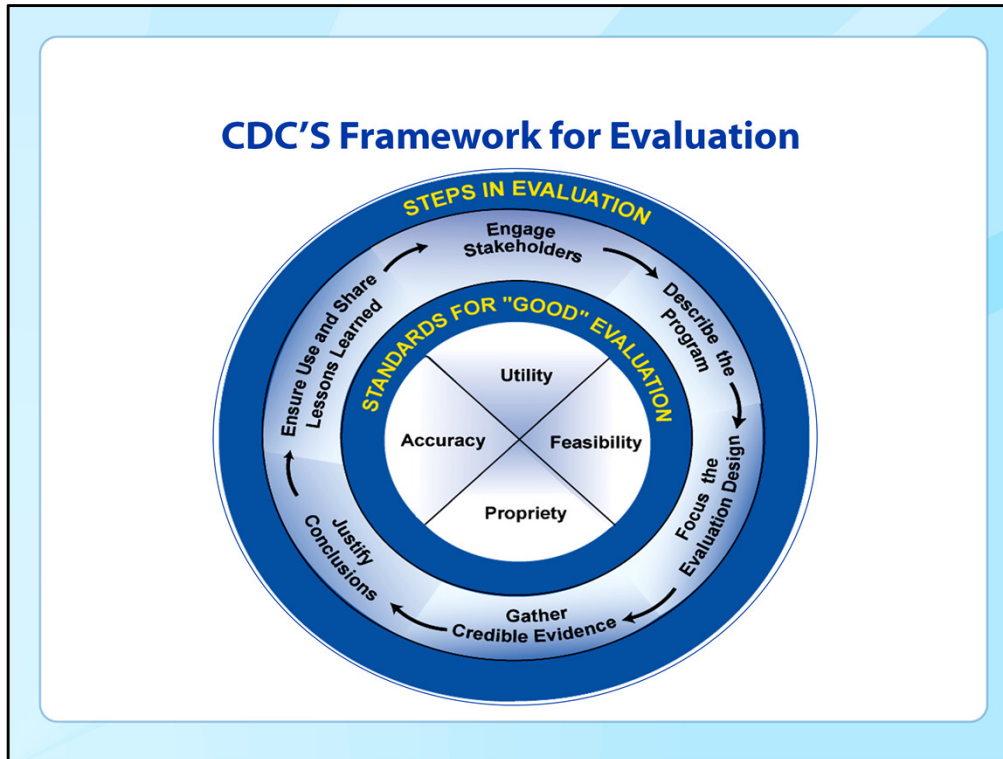
## Existing Cultural Competence Practice Frameworks

### □ Culturally Responsive Evaluation (Frierson, Hood & Hughes, 2002)



In my review of existing frameworks developed to promote cultural competence in evaluation, three frameworks stood out. They are, the Indigenous Evaluation Framework by LaFrance and Nichols, the Talent Development Framework by Thomas, and the Culturally Responsive Evaluation Framework by Frierson, Hood and Hughes. And by the way, these references are included on the resource slide later in this presentation. All three frameworks have implications for integrating cultural competence in evaluation, however, the Frierson Framework seems to have just a bit more on relevance for today's talk and possibly because of its similarities to the CDC framework for evaluation.

As you can see, the Frierson framework consists of 9 steps or stages. They are: Preparing for the Evaluation; engaging stakeholders; identifying purpose of the evaluation; framing the right questions; designing the evaluation; selecting and adopting instrumentation; collecting data; analyze the data; and disseminating and using the results. As I mentioned earlier, there are a lot of similarities with our CDC framework.



So as a starting point for programs that are interesting in incorporating aspects of cultural competence in evaluation, I'd suggest starting with a framework that you are already familiar with such as the CDC Framework. One way of doing this is to begin looking at what questions we can ask within the six steps that will help ensure that aspects of cultural competence are considered. There may be other questions that you may want to add and that are more specific to your program's evaluation context.

As a reminder those six steps in the CDC framework are 1) Engaging Stakeholders, 2) Describing the program, 3) Focusing the Evaluation, 4) Gathering credible evidence, 5) Justifying conclusions, and 6) Ensuring use and sharing lessons learned.

Over the next several slides, I'd like to offer some questions for your consideration that I think will help to guide your evaluation toward a more culturally competent evaluation. Although they are not all inclusive, these questions are intended to serve as a mental check to ensure that your program's evaluation has taken into account some of the key elements to establish cultural competence in evaluation.

## **Step 1. Engage Stakeholders**

**(Questions for Consideration)**

- ❑ **Who is represented?**
- ❑ **Are multiple voices included?**
- ❑ **Is the evaluator (or evaluation team) aware of own cultural values, assumptions, prejudices, and stereotypes?**
- ❑ **Has a climate of trust and respect been developed?**
- ❑ **Is there an awareness of issues of power, status and social class?**

When engaging stakeholders, some questions that may be considered or that you may want to ask yourself are: Which stakeholders are represented and at the table? Are multiple voices included? Is the evaluator or evaluation team aware of their own cultural values, assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes? Has a climate of trust and respect been developed?

And the last question I've included here captures many of the previous points but asking "Is there an awareness of issues of power, status and social class?" is an important one. For example, this could be an issue for evaluators who may be perceived as outsiders to the community or it could be the case that the program is perceived as an outsider especially in cases where the program has encountered challenges with connecting with the community or a particular group within the community.

## **Step 2. Describe the Program**

**(Questions for Consideration)**

- How well is the program connecting with its intended consumers?**
- Are program resources equitably distributed?**
- Is the program history adequately described?**
- Are the appropriate people describing the program?**
- Are contextual factors being considered?**

As we move to the next step in the framework of describing the program, it may be helpful to ask: How well is the program connecting with its intended consumers? Are program resources equitably distributed? Is the program history adequately described? Are the appropriate people describing the program?

The final question included here for your consideration is: Are contextual factors being considered? There may be some factors unique to your program or the community served that can impact implementation or the expected outcomes. Some examples of contextual factors that come to mind are geographical locations, timing, political and social climate and economic conditions.

### **Step 3. Focus the Evaluation Design**

(Questions for Consideration)

- ❑ **What/Whose perspectives are represented in the evaluation question?**
- ❑ **How will multiple views be obtained?**
- ❑ **Is the design appropriate to both evaluation questions and cultural context?**

When focusing the evaluation design consider what perspectives are represented in the evaluation questions? How will multiple views be obtained? Is the design appropriate to both evaluation questions and cultural context? For example, key informant interviews may be ideal for answering a particular evaluation question, however, implementation of the program in a large, rural geographical area may present a challenge for conducting in-person interviews.

## **Step 4. Gather Credible Evidence**

**(Questions for Consideration)**

- ❑ **Are language and content of instruments culturally sensitive?**
- ❑ **How are confidentiality of information and information sources safeguarded?**
- ❑ **Whose perspectives are accepted as credible evidence?**

Some questions to consider during step 4 when gathering credible evidence include: Are language and content of instruments culturally sensitive? How are confidentiality of data and information sources safeguarded? Whose perspectives are accepted as credible evidence? For example, do all stakeholders perceive the information as trustworthy and relevant for answering their questions?

## **Step 5. Justify Conclusions**

**(Questions for Consideration)**

- ❑ **Are appropriate methods of analysis and synthesis used?**
- ❑ **Are conclusions validated by participants?**
- ❑ **Are alternative explanations for findings considered?**
- ❑ **Are findings meaningful to group or community of interest?**

In step 5 where we justify conclusions, some possible questions are: Are appropriate methods of analysis and synthesis used? In addition to answering the evaluation questions, were the methods used sensitive to the cultural context? Are conclusions validated by participants? Are alternative explanations for findings considered? And ultimately, we want to ask questions to help us determine if findings are meaningful to the group or community of interest.



## **Step 6. Ensure Use and Share Lessons Learned**

**(Questions for Consideration)**

- Are there clear benefits to the participants/community?**
- Is continuous feedback to stakeholders provided?**
- Are appropriate communication mechanisms used?**

When ensuring use and sharing lessons learned, consider asking if there are clear benefits to the participants or community. Is continuous feedback to stakeholders provided? And are appropriate communication mechanisms used? For example, I recently reviewed an evaluation plan that proposed sharing evaluation results with their community through the use of email and webinars. Well the challenge with that proposed strategy is that a large portion of the community had limited access to email and the internet, which would ultimately limit information getting out to the target population.

## **Essential Practices for Cultural Competence in Evaluation**

- ❑ **Acknowledge the complexity of cultural identity**
- ❑ **Recognize the dynamics of power**
- ❑ **Recognize and eliminate bias in language**
- ❑ **Employ culturally appropriate methods**
- ❑ **Consider contextual factors**

(AEA, 2011)

In summary, the essential practices for cultural competence in evaluation, as highlighted in AEA's public statement, include: Acknowledging the complexity of cultural identity; recognizing the dynamics of power; recognizing and eliminating biases in language; employing culturally appropriate methods; and considering the contextual factors.

## Next Steps

To share lessons learned regarding cultural competence in evaluation, please email me at:  
[dgervin@cdc.gov](mailto:dgervin@cdc.gov)



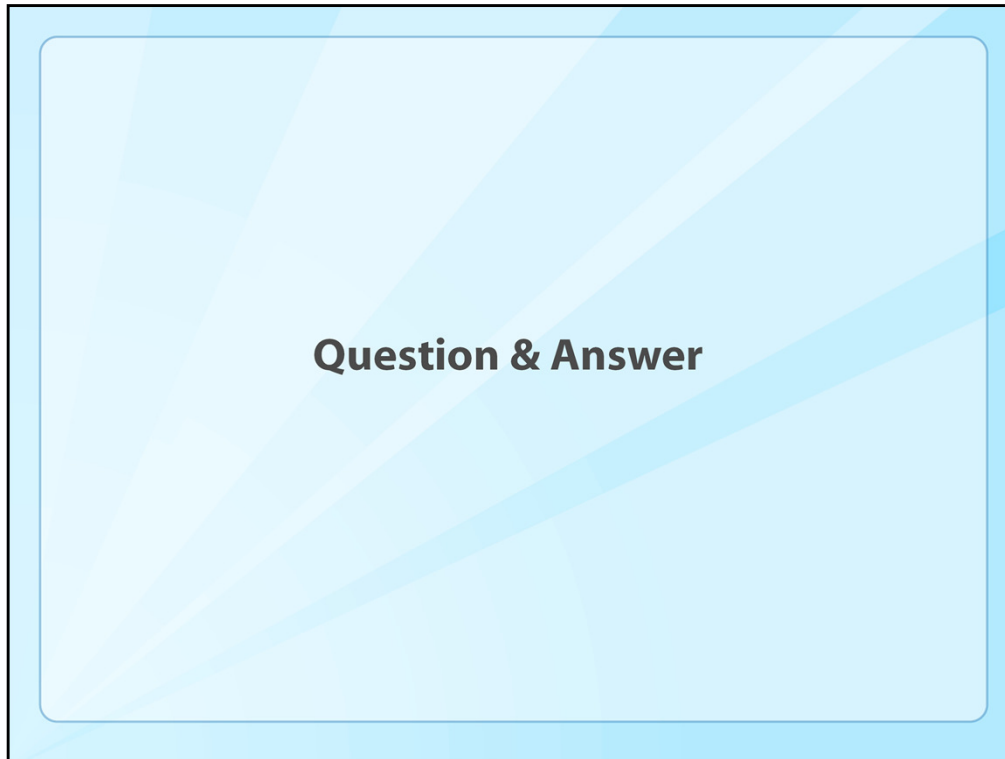
As a next step in this work, I think it would be good to begin identifying CDC funded programs that are working to establish cultural competence in evaluation. Once identified, these programs could serve as a resource to others that are interested in this work. Therefore, I would like to invite programs to send me any information regarding strategies, practice frameworks or models they have used to establish cultural competence in evaluation. Feel free to email me directly at [dgervin@cdc.gov](mailto:dgervin@cdc.gov) which is listed here on this slide.

## Helpful References



- ❑ **AEA's *Public Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation***  
<http://www.eval.org/ccstatement.asp>
- ❑ **SenGupta, Hopson, Thompson-Robinson (2004). Cultural competence in evaluation: An overview. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 102, 5-19.**
- ❑ **Indigenous Evaluation Framework (LaFrance and Nichols, 2010).**
- ❑ **Talent Development (Thomas, 2004).**

As I stated earlier, this is just an introduction to cultural competence in evaluation. This is my final slide with some helpful resources beginning with a link to AEA's Public Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation. Also, listed here is a popular article that provides an overview of cultural competence in evaluation.



**Question:** If our program has already taken steps to ensure our program and providers are culturally competing, is it necessary to focus on cultural competence in evaluation?

Yes, I think it is because if you're already focused on training and implementation and processes, I think you need to, you would want to make sure that your program is culturally competent throughout and so making sure that evaluators or evaluations teams has an understanding of its community and the contextual issues are very important. Also I think often the time, or the challenge is when you have external evaluators, sometimes they're just not as familiar with the program or the community, so you really want to make sure you bring them up to speed

**Question:** Are there any training or licensing programs specific to cultural competent in evaluation?

I'm not familiar with any licensing programs, however, I know I mentioned several times the American Evaluation Association, and they have quite a few sessions that are specific to cultural competence. In fact, the annual meeting that's coming up in October I believe, later October, I don't know the exact date, but it is in Minnesota this year, and there are a number of sessions. One that comes to mind there is a group, the - - Think Tank Group, they often put on issues related to cultural

competence. Also, here in Atlanta, annually we have the Summer Institute where you may also find a few sessions where you can learn a little bit more about cultural competence in evaluation.

**Question:** Can we use any of the frameworks that you presented?

Yes. I will add though that the frameworks that I shared specifically the Talent Development Framework, the Indigenous Framework as well as the Culturally Responsive Framework by Frierson, they're all from the field of education, and of course nothing is wrong with that, but I just want to make sure folks there in the field understand that when you start to defined this to public health programs, there may be some challenges. However, the essential components of these frameworks I think are the same, and you can get some benefits from using some of the models of frameworks that were presented earlier. But I feel would encourage us to focus on trying to find creative ways of using the CDC's framework for evaluation.

# Thank You

If you have any questions, comments, or  
topic ideas send an email to:

**[amirambeau@cdc.gov](mailto:amirambeau@cdc.gov)**

**For more information please contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

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