

# *Program Evaluation Webinar Series*

**February 5, 2009  
2-3:30 pm**

Dial: (800) 374-0278  
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# *Using the CDC Framework for Program Evaluation: Gathering Data, Developing Conclusions, and Putting Your Findings to Use.*

CDC/EPA Webinar Series  
February 5, 2009

Christina A. Christie, Ph.D.  
Claremont Graduate University

# Goals for this Session

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- ❑ Understand and consider the various ways evaluation can influence decisions and activities
  
- ❑ Examine CDC Evaluation Model Steps 4-6 with respect to how best to facilitate use of evaluations
  
- ❑ Identify strategies for promoting and increasing evaluation use

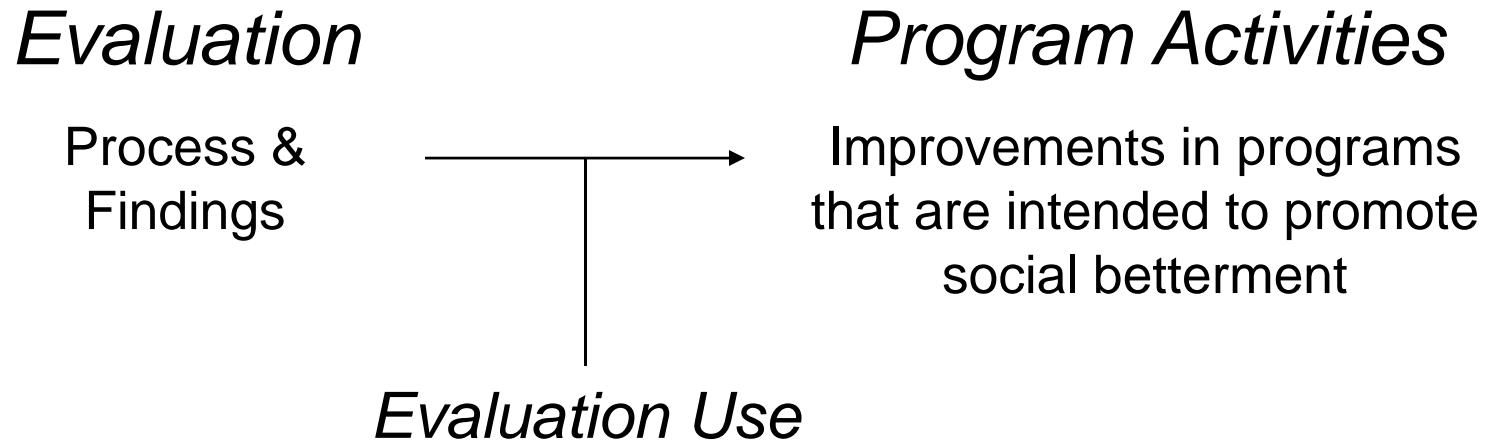
# Evaluation vs. Research

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- ▶ Study purpose
  - ▶ Research- to add knowledge to a field- conclusions
  - ▶ Evaluation- to make decisions- judgments
- ▶ Who sets the agenda
  - ▶ Research- the researcher
  - ▶ Evaluation- significant stakeholders
- ▶ Generalizations
  - ▶ Research- maximize for applicability to many settings
  - ▶ Evaluation- context specific

# Evaluations with Impact

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The connection between the work of the evaluation and the program/policy activities that improve society

# Use: A Motivator for Conducting Evaluation

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Providing information for  
decision making and improving programs/policies  
are two primary motivations for evaluation

# Use: What Do We Mean?

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## *Instrumental*

- ▶ Evaluation findings lead to immediate and specific actions such as program continuation, expansion, revision or termination

## *Enlightenment/Conceptual*

- ▶ More general learning that takes place as a result of evaluation

## *Process Use*

- ▶ “Beyond” findings use
- ▶ What “happens” to people & organizations as a result of participating in evaluation activities

## *Evaluation Capacity Building*

- ▶ The primary purpose of the evaluation - intentional

# Process Use & Capacity Building

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## Individual

- ▶ Changes in thinking & behaving as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process

## Organizational

- ▶ Changes in organizational procedures or culture

# Break

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## Open for comments and questions

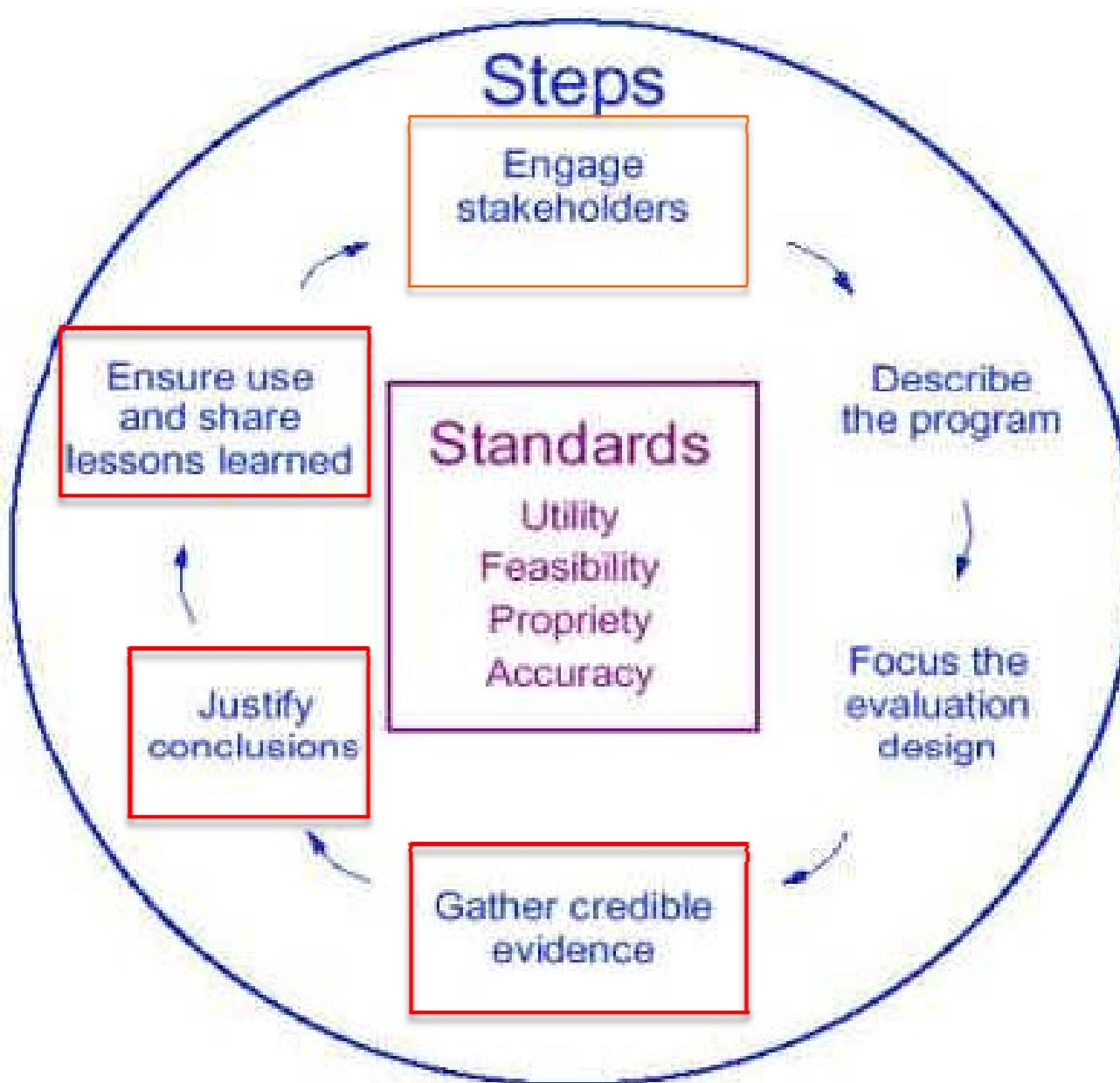
- ▶ From your own work/experience please share an example of evaluation use
  - ▶ Instrumental
  - ▶ Enlightenment/Conceptual
  - ▶ Process or Capacity Building
- What was the circumstance?
- Who was involved?
- What made this information useful?
- How did it impact you?

# How Do We Foster Evaluation Use?

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- ▶ Determine the information needs of relevant stakeholder groups – engage stakeholders
- ▶ Ensure that your data are considered to be credible based on the values of your target stakeholder audience
- ▶ Present the data in format that is meaningful and accessible to your stakeholder audience – one size does not fit all

# CDC Evaluation Framework



# Engage Stakeholders (Step 1- revisited)

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Important: Step 1 sets the stage for Steps 4-6

- Fostering input, participation, and power-sharing among those persons who have an investment in the conduct of the evaluation and the findings; it is especially important to engage primary users of the evaluation.
- Helps increase chances that the evaluation will be useful; can improve the evaluation's credibility, clarify roles and responsibilities, enhance cultural competence, help protect human subjects, and avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest.

# When to Consider Use?

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2 Phases:

From the **START** of the evaluation  
**THROUGHOUT** the evaluation

... which will lead to use both *During* and at the *Conclusion* of the evaluation

# Conditions Necessary for Use

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Evaluation activities, process and findings must  
be accepted as:

1 - Accurate

2 - Relevant

# Research on Use

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Factors identified that lead to use:

The “Personal Factor”

Credible Evidence

Political Factors

# The Personal Factor

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“The presence of an identifiable individual or group who personally care about the evaluation and the findings it generates.”

“Presence of the personal factor increases the likelihood of long term follow through, that is, the persistence of getting evaluation findings used.”

(Patton, 1997)

# Intended Use by Intended Users

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- ▶ People use information (intended users)
- ▶ Users have specific *information needs* (intended uses)
- ▶ *Intended uses* focus the evaluation

# The Psychology of Utilization Focused Evaluation (UFE)

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- ▶ Intended users are more likely to use evaluations if they understand and feel ownership of the evaluation process and findings;
- ▶ Intended users are more likely to understand and feel ownership if they've been actively involved;
- ▶ By actively involving intended users, the evaluator is training users in use, preparing the groundwork for use, and reinforcing the intended utility of the evaluation every step along the way.

# Who are Intended Users?

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- ▶ People willing and able to use information
- ▶ Must have a formal position and authority in decision making
- ▶ Ideally, a group representing more than one constituency
  - ▶ Research shows Median # 6

# Identifying Potential Intended Users: Stakeholder Audiences

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## ▶ Primary Audiences

- ✓ Major decision makers, funders
- ✓ Program staff, supervisors, managers, external constituents

## ▶ Secondary Audiences

- ✓ May have little or no daily contact with program but may have some level of responsibility for the program; may use results in some decision making situations (e.g., program participants or their supervisors or managers)

## ▶ Tertiary Audiences

- ✓ More distanced from program's inner workings; may be interested in the results (e.g., future program participants, general public, special interest groups)

# What are Intended Uses?

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- ▶ Render judgments
- ▶ Facilitate improvements
- ▶ Generate knowledge

The evaluator assists the intended users in determining the intended uses of the evaluation

# Some Questions for Intended Users about Intended Uses: Understanding the Use Context

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- ▶ What decisions are the evaluation findings expected to influence? By whom? When must findings be presented to ensure use?
- ▶ What's the history and context of the decision making context?
- ▶ What other factors will affect decision making?
  - ▶ politics, personalities, promises
- ▶ How much influence might the evaluation have?
- ▶ To what extent has the outcome of the decision already been determined?
- ▶ What data are necessary to inform the decision?
- ▶ What needs to be done to achieve use?
  - ▶ Which stakeholders must have buy in?

# Critical Activities

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- Consult insiders (e.g., leaders, staff, clients, and program funding sources) and outsiders (e.g., skeptics)
- Take special effort to promote the inclusion of less powerful groups or individuals
- Coordinate stakeholder input throughout the process of evaluation design, operation, and use; and
- Avoid excessive stakeholder identification, which might prevent progress of your work

# Break

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- ▶ Open for comments and questions

## Step 4: Gathering Credible Evidence

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- ▶ Information that stakeholders perceive as trustworthy and relevant
- ▶ Persons involved in an evaluation should strive to collect information that will convey a well-rounded picture of the program and be seen as credible by the evaluation's primary users.
- ▶ When stakeholders find evaluation data to be credible, they are more likely to accept the findings and to act on its recommendations.

# Gathering Credible Evidence

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## Indicators

- ▶ How will general concepts regarding the program, its context, and its expected effects be translated into specific measures that can be interpreted? Will the chosen indicators provide systematic data that is valid and reliable for the intended uses?

## Quality

- ▶ Is the information trustworthy (i.e., reliable, valid, and informative for the intended uses)?

## Quantity

- ▶ What amount of information is sufficient? What level of confidence or precision is possible? Is there adequate power to detect effects? Is the respondent burden reasonable?

# What Counts as Credible Evidence?

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- How evaluation questions are posed
- Beliefs about truth, knowledge and knowing
- Sources of information
- Conditions of data collection, reliability of measurement, validity of interpretations, and quality control procedures
- These may vary from context to context, user to user

# Evaluation Design

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- ▶ Experimental (Gold Standard?)
- ▶ Quasi-Experimental
- ▶ Non-Experimental



# Data Collection Methods

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- ▶ **Quantitative**
  - ▶ Observations that lend themselves to numeric representations (numbers)
- ▶ **Qualitative**
  - ▶ Observations that do NOT lend themselves to numeric representations (words)
- ▶ **Mixed-methods**



# Data Collection Methods

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- ▶ Surveys
- ▶ Interviews
- ▶ Focus Groups
- ▶ Observations
- ▶ Tests (Assessments)
- ▶ Document Review



# Break

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- ▶ Open for comments and questions
- ▶ Please share examples of how stakeholders perspectives of what constitutes credible evidence might affect the type of evaluation design and data collection methods you might use

# Fair Justification of Conclusions: Step 5

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- ▶ Evaluation conclusions are justified when they are linked to the evidence gathered and judged against agreed-upon values or standards set by the stakeholders.
- ▶ Stakeholders must agree that conclusions are justified before they will use the evaluation results with confidence.

# Justifying Conclusions

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## Standards

- ▶ Which stakeholder values provide the basis for forming judgments? What type or level of performance must be reached for the program to be considered successful?

## Interpretation

- ▶ What do the findings mean (i.e., what is their practical significance)?

## Judgment

- ▶ What claims concerning the program/policy's merit, worth, or significance are justified based on the available evidence and the selected standards?

## Recommendations

- ▶ What actions should be considered resulting from the evaluation? [Note: Making recommendations is distinct from forming judgments and presumes a thorough understanding of the context in which programmatic decisions will be made.]

# Critical Activities

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- Use culturally and methodologically appropriate methods of analysis and synthesis to summarize findings;
- Interpret the significance of results for deciding what the findings mean;
- Make judgments according to clearly stated values that classify a result (e.g., as positive or negative and high or low);
- Consider alternative ways to compare results (e.g., compared with program objectives, a comparison group, national norms, past performance, or needs);
- Generate alternative explanations for findings and indicating why these explanations should be discounted;
- Recommend actions or decisions that are consistent with the conclusions;
- Limit conclusions to situations, time periods, persons, contexts, and purposes for which the findings are applicable.

# Mock Data Application Scenarios

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## Fabricating possible results

- ▶ Checks to be sure important questions are being answered
- ▶ Tests standards and beliefs about credible evidence
- ▶ Identify Standards of Desirability -- Level at which program is considered:
  - ▶ Effective
  - ▶ Adequate
  - ▶ Inadequate
- ▶ Realistic expectations of results
- ▶ Increases commitment to use

# Points to Note

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- ▶ Strive for Balance
- ▶ Be Clear About Definitions
- ▶ Make Comparisons Carefully & Appropriately
- ▶ Don't surprise stakeholders with negative findings

# Break

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- ▶ Open for comments and questions

## Ensuring Use and Sharing Lessons Learned: Building Capacity to Use Results: Step 6

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- ▶ Determine the current capacity of your stakeholder audience (users) to use results
- ▶ Prepare important groups for use (a strategy):
  - ▶ Communication and Reporting Plan

# Ensuring Use & Sharing Lessons Learned

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- ▶ We should not assume that lessons learned in the course of evaluation will automatically translate into informed decision-making and appropriate action.
- ▶ Deliberate effort is needed to ensure that the evaluation processes and findings are used and disseminated appropriately.
- ▶ Preparing for use involves strategic thinking and continued vigilance, both of which begin in the earliest stages of stakeholder engagement and continue throughout the evaluation process.

# Ensuring Use & Sharing Lessons Learned

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## Design

- ▶ *Is the evaluation organized from the start to achieve intended uses by primary users?*

## Preparation

- ▶ *Have steps been taken to rehearse eventual use of the evaluation findings? How have stakeholders been prepared to translate new knowledge into appropriate action?*

## Feedback

- ▶ *What communication will occur among parties to the evaluation? Is there an atmosphere of trust among stakeholders?*

## Follow-up

- ▶ *How will the technical and emotional needs of users be supported? What will prevent lessons learned from becoming lost or ignored in the process of making complex or politically sensitive decisions? What safeguards are in place for preventing misuse of the evaluation?*

## Dissemination

- ▶ *How will the procedures or the lessons learned from the evaluation be communicated to relevant audiences in a timely, unbiased, and consistent fashion? How will reports be tailored for different audiences?*

# Critical Activities

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- Design the evaluation to achieve intended use by intended users;
- Prepare stakeholders for eventual use by rehearsing throughout the project how different kinds of conclusions would affect program operations;
- Provide continuous feedback to stakeholders regarding interim findings, provisional interpretations, and decisions to be made that might affect likelihood of use;
- Schedule follow-up meetings with intended users to facilitate the transfer of evaluation conclusions into appropriate actions or decisions; and
- Disseminate both the procedures used and the lessons learned from the evaluation to stakeholders, using tailored communications strategies that meet their particular needs.

# Why an Evaluation Communication Plan?

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- ▶ Helps plan for communications throughout an evaluation
- ▶ Increases likelihood that information will meet users' needs
- ▶ Increases likelihood of evaluation use
- ▶ Informs the evaluation budget

# Elements of the Communication Plan

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- ▶ Identify intended audience
- ▶ Format and style of the communication
- ▶ Frequency and timing
- ▶ Deadlines

# Sample Communication Plan

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Stakeholder Audience	Communicating & Reporting Need	Format	When Needed
	Progress report on monitoring & evaluation activities		
	Interim findings		
	Final findings		
	Other reporting activities		

# Communication Format: Stakeholder/Audience Characteristics

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- ▶ Accessibility
- ▶ Reading ability
- ▶ Familiarity with the program and or the evaluation
- ▶ Role in decision making
- ▶ Familiarity with research and evaluation methods
- ▶ Experience using evaluation findings

# Communication Formats

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## Informal

- ▶ Short communications: memos, faxes, email
- ▶ Personal discussions
- ▶ Working sessions

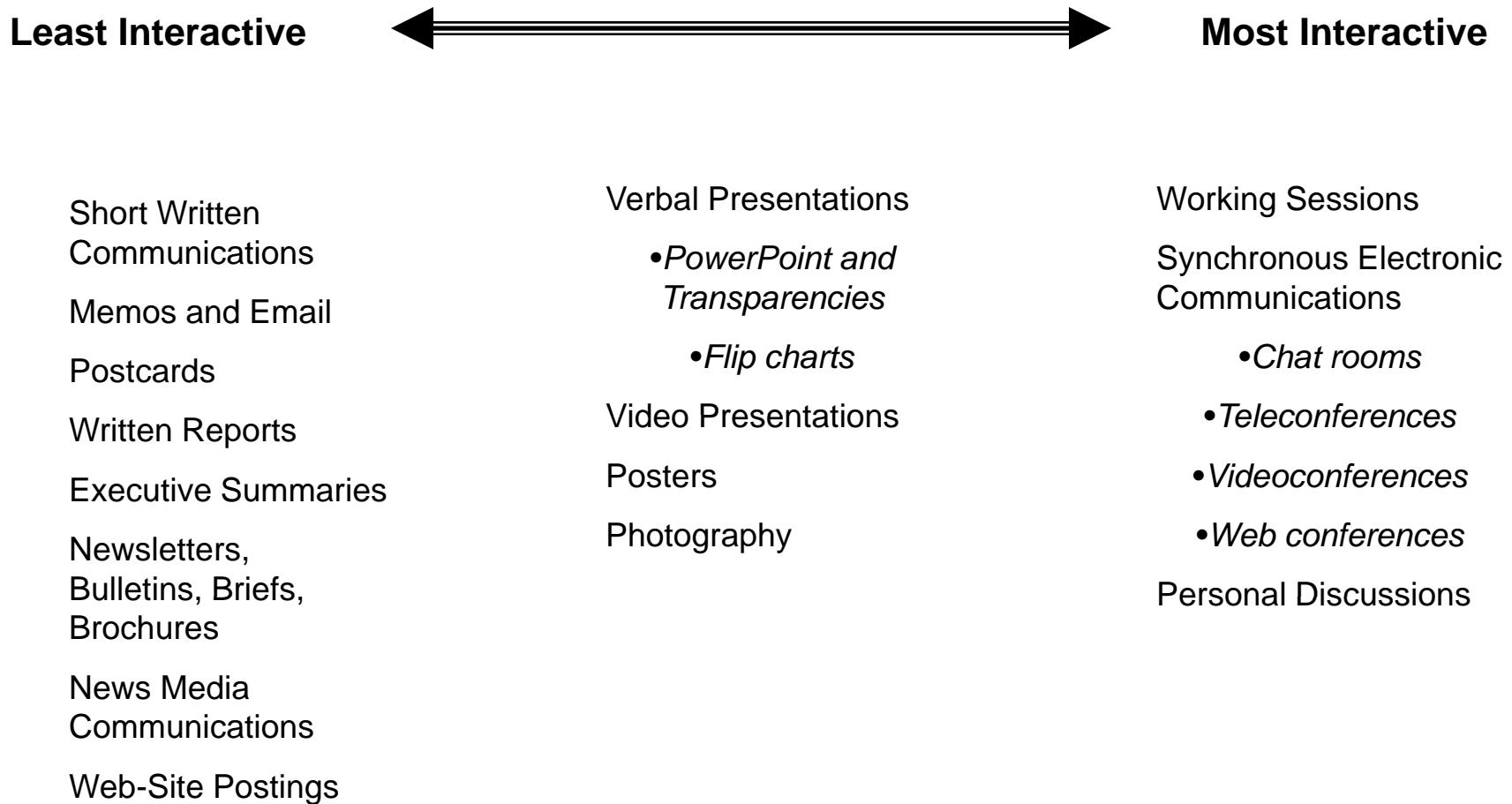
# Communication Formats

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## Formal

- ▶ Verbal Presentations
- ▶ Videotape Presentations
- ▶ Conferences
- ▶ Public Meetings
- ▶ Written reports
- ▶ Executive Summaries
- ▶ Chart Essays
- ▶ Web
- ▶ Poster Sessions

# Formats and Strategies by Degree of Interaction with Audience



# In Sum: What Do We Know?

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- ▶ There are factors necessary for obtaining use
  - ▶ Buy-in
  - ▶ Credible evidence
- ▶ Evaluation activities operate in a political context
- ▶ Potential decision makers do not operate with a clean slate & have a working knowledge about polices and programs
- ▶ A decision is not the only evidence of evaluation impact (process use/capacity building)

**Thank you for your time and attention!**

If you have any additional questions on this presentation or the webinar series please feel free to contact representatives from the Center for Disease Control & Prevention's Air Pollution & Respiratory Health Branch:

Maureen Wilce  
[muw9@cdc.gov](mailto:muw9@cdc.gov)

Leslie A. Fierro  
[let6@cdc.gov](mailto:let6@cdc.gov)



# Opportunities and Events

- **Apply: EPA's National Environmental Leadership Award in Asthma Management**
  - Get information and apply online:
  - [www.asthmaawards.info](http://www.asthmaawards.info)
- **Attend: National Asthma Forum**
  - June 4-5 in Washington DC
  - Get information and register:
  - [www.epaasthmaforum.com](http://www.epaasthmaforum.com)
- **Join: *Communities in Action for Asthma Friendly Environments***
  - Program Evaluation webinar series archive
  - Resource Bank, Networking, Mentors, Discussion Forums and more
  - [www.AsthmaCommunityNetwork.org](http://www.AsthmaCommunityNetwork.org)