

# The Developmental Evaluation Toolkit

## READINESS FOR DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

Every organization or coalition is ready to engage in some level of learning, in part because most organizations and groups already engage in learning. The learning may not be systematic, planned in advance, and based on the highest quality information, but it is typically still present at some level. However, a developmental evaluation requires a high level of learning readiness, and that requires a supportive organizational culture.

Few organizations or groups could claim to have all of the cultural elements in the attached survey. The question is not whether the setting is 100% ready for developmental evaluation, but rather in what ways *is* it ready and how will you adapt your approach in response to the readiness.

**Implementing the Assessment:** The attached assessment tool is a series of comparisons, each of which represent a range of how an organization or collaborative culture can function. Rather than asking stakeholders to take the survey themselves, we have found it works best to fill it in after interviewing key stakeholders and building an understanding of the environment they are in. In other words, the answers come best through discussion. This can happen as part of your one-on-one conversations or in a group dialogue.

If you choose to have participants take it as a survey, it is helpful to create time for participants to debrief their thinking after taking it. For example, you might hand it out during a collaborative meeting and have everyone take five minutes to answer it, followed by discussing the results and the implications for how to do learning together.

**Analyzing the Data:** The analysis is fairly simple. For each item where the score is greater than two, a plan is needed for how to engage in developmental evaluation, given the lower level of readiness. Below are some suggestions for how to implement developmental evaluation in environments with lower readiness.

Barrier in the organizational culture	Techniques for adapting the Developmental evaluation process to the barrier
Negative Consequences for Failure	Focus on improving parts of the overall strategy that staff and leaders agree are somewhat effective, but could be improved. Wait until the culture begins to shift to tackle a challenging problem or a part of the strategy that may not be achieving its desired outcomes.
Acting on Instinct	Begin by identifying ways that you can use data to rapidly inform the quick decisions and abrupt changes in course that the leaders make.

### Are you interested in more tips and tools for developmental evaluation?

Spark Policy Institute's ([www.sparkpolicy.com](http://www.sparkpolicy.com)) interactive Developmental Evaluation Toolkit is available at [www.sparkpolicy.com/DEtoolkit](http://www.sparkpolicy.com/DEtoolkit). Please share your stories about developmental evaluation, share your tools, and access the tools and ideas from other evaluators.



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Barrier in the organizational culture	Techniques for adapting the Developmental evaluation process to the barrier
Highly Defined, Inflexible Strategies	Initiative developmental evaluation when a new strategy is being developed rather than trying to change existing ones.
Focus on Efficiency	Focus the developmental evaluation activities on questions that relate to efficiency and environmental context and limit the learning to those areas at first. Only expand once effectiveness at achieving other types of outcomes is recognized as a tool for efficiency.
Transition and Transience	Allow each individual to identify the parts of the strategies they most want to learn about, even if they are less directly relevant to the overall developmental strategy's success. Seek to build individual commitments to learning while also focusing on developing organizational processes that support learning.
Task-Based Accountability	Identify those individuals for whom engaging in developmental evaluation activities will fit within their existing job descriptions and scopes of work. If the evaluation leads to a realization that the current activities are not the right ones, use the data collected to approach organizational leaders and discuss the need for greater flexibility, including the flexibility to allow more staff to participate in the learning process.

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# ORGANIZATIONAL OR COLLABORATION'S READINESS FOR DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

Please select the number that best represents your organization or collaboration's current culture.

1 = Yes, this is definitely my organization's culture	2 = Hmm, this is somewhat my organization's culture	3 = My organization's culture is a mix of the two	4 = Hmm, this is somewhat my organization's culture	5 = Yes, this is definitely my organization's culture
<p><b><i>Permission to Fail</i></b> Evidence of leaders and staff acknowledging that something didn't work and trying another strategy. Modeled by top leadership and actively supported by middle management.</p>	↔		<p><b><i>Negative Consequences for Failure</i></b> Evidence of past leaders and staff who have faced negative consequences for trying something that didn't work. Lack of transparency and discussion about the organization's areas for improvement.</p>	
1	2	3	4	5
<p><b><i>Planning and Preparation</i></b> Purposeful planning and thoughtful processes for developing strategies and ensuring everyone has the knowledge and capacity to implement them.</p>	↔		<p><b><i>Acting on Instinct</i></b> Work styles among leaders and managers that can be described by phrases like, "flying by the seat of your pants," and "acting on instinct."</p>	
1	2	3	4	5
<p><b><i>Open to Changing Strategies</i></b> Balance between implementing as planned and allowing changes. Permission to deviate from the plan, particularly after discussing why the change might make a difference.</p>	↔		<p><b><i>Highly Defined, Inflexible Strategies</i></b> Rigid adherence to "how things are done" with little room for change. Highly defined operational plans and performance metrics for the organization, staff, and projects.</p>	
1	2	3	4	5
<p><b><i>Focus on Effectiveness</i></b> Encouragement to achieve the best outcomes possible. Expectation that everyone find ways to improve and do even better next time.</p>	↔		<p><b><i>Focus on Efficiency</i></b> Encouragement to get as much work done as quickly as possible. Expectations that everyone is highly productive at all times.</p>	
1	2	3	4	5
<p><b><i>Commitment and Consistency</i></b> Low turnover of staff at all levels. Organizational strategies to help staff view their job as a commitment, something they are passionate about.</p>	↔		<p><b><i>Transition and Turnover</i></b> Regular turnover of staff at all levels. Tendency by staff to view their jobs as just a job - not a career, not a passion, and not a commitment.</p>	
1	2	3	4	5