

Evaluation Capacity Building: Landscape Analysis

Evaluation capacity building (ECB) is an intentional process to increase individual motivation, knowledge, and skills, and to enhance a group or organization’s ability to conduct or use evaluation.

While coaching and peer learning are frequent regular for ECB, the most **common approach** in recent years follows something like the following **formula**:

1. **Learn** about ECB-receiving organization and its capacities,
2. Provide targeted **trainings** to staff in roles contributing to evaluations,
3. Provide some **ongoing support** and technical assistance.

Because of this common approach, many evaluators are experiencing similar **challenges** with ECB, including: time and learning transfer, staff turnover, low buy-in and take-up of evaluation across the organization, and the necessary adaptation of ECB to fit each unique organization and context.

Literature on “ECB best practices” now focus on how to counteract those challenges, and all leads to building an embedded learning culture to sustain ECB.

Characteristics of orgs with successful ECB	Characteristics of orgs that experience challenges
Focus is on building a learning culture	Low organizational knowledge prior to ECB, e.g., pre-assessment staff capacity and attitudes on evaluation
Leadership buy-in; in the best cases this includes a leadership style that accommodates evaluation, such as appreciative inquiry	Misalignment of goals between stakeholders, e.g. unrealistic expectations of funders
Recognition of staff capacity required for effective evaluation, and building this into job descriptions	Negative attitudes towards evaluation
	Lack of time and resources

When all staff are driven by organizational success, ECB is easier to integrate. This creates a common goal of continuous improvement.

Other fields are exploring best practices for building learning cultures. In the business realm, experts in change management have the following recommendations for starting to **build a learning culture**:

- Build in **time and space** for reflective conversations among both staff and leadership,
- Build **trust** through these conversations by acknowledging and incorporating feedback, and
- Communicate with funders about the need to frame negative outcomes as a **learning opportunity**.

We still have **unanswered questions**. In our review of the literature, we discovered there are gaps that would provide helpful insight:

- Going deeper into what works in ECB and why, and
- ECB strategies that are focused on low-resource organizations.

Selected References

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This paper was developed from research conducted by Sara Mowchan at Innovation Network from July-September 2018. This research included a review of academic journals and gray literature totaling 43 sources, and six interviews with evaluators and funders of ECB.

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