

# Build Tools for Nonprofit Sustainability and Innovative Giving

## Cluster Evaluation Plan

### To the Members of the Tools Cluster:

Your response to the evaluation presentations made at the March 2003 Tools cluster networking meeting made it clear that you are interested in knowing how the cluster is being evaluated. This document responds to your interest.

In Section 1 you will find information about the W. K. Kellogg Foundation's [WKKF] framework for evaluation, principles that guide the Tools cluster evaluation and the relationship between project, cluster, and initiative levels of evaluation.

Section 2 provides the Tools cluster logic model – the framework that guides what evaluation questions are asked. Logic models link the intended outcomes of a program (both short and long term) with various program activities and processes, as well as the theoretical assumptions and principles of the program.

Section 3 lists the Tools cluster evaluation questions. These are questions that we will attempt to answer for the cluster. Since each project is unique, we do not expect that every project will be able to answer every question – rather, that each project will contribute the information it has and together with other projects, and even independent data collection, we will be able to gather sufficient information to answer the questions.

Section 4 explains the evaluation instruments, methods, and timeline that we expect to implement September 2003 – August 2004. In this section you will see how and when you will be invited to participate in the cluster evaluation.

Appendix A displays the guidelines WKKF uses to determine the evaluation levels for grant projects.

Questions about this evaluation plan may be directed to Dr. Cathy Martinez, CenterPoint Institute, 480-641-1443, [clm@centerpointinstitute.org](mailto:clm@centerpointinstitute.org).

# Build Tools for Nonprofit Sustainability and Innovative Giving

## Cluster Evaluation Plan

### Section 1: Introduction

*Evaluation is to help projects become even better than they planned to be... First and foremost, evaluation should support the project.*

*W. K. Kellogg Foundation  
Evaluation Approach, 1997*

#### **The W. K. Kellogg Foundation's Framework for Evaluation**

(Adapted from Chapter One, *W. K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook*)

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation places a high value on evaluation and has established the following principles to help guide evaluation work.

**Strengthen projects:** The goal of the Foundation is to improve the well-being of people. Evaluation furthers this goal by providing ongoing, systematic information that strengthens projects, clusters, and initiatives during their life cycle, and, whenever possible, outcome data to assess the extent of change. The evaluation effort should leave an organization stronger and more able to use such an evaluation when outside support ends.

**Use multiple approaches:** The Foundation supports multidisciplinary approaches to problem solving. Evaluation methods should include a range of techniques to address important evaluation questions.

**Design evaluation to address real issues:** The Foundation believes evaluation should be grounded in the real issues being addressed by communities. Evaluation efforts should also be community based and contextual (based on local circumstances and issues). Therefore, the cluster evaluation plan should build upon the evaluation work of projects, and provide staff and stakeholders with reliable information from which to address problems and build on strengths and opportunities.

**Create a participatory process:** Just as people participate in project activities, people must participate in project evaluation. Just as projects participate in cluster activities, projects must participate in cluster evaluation. The best evaluations value multiple perspectives and involve a representation of people who are about the project/cluster. Effective evaluations also prepare organizations to use evaluation as an ongoing function of management and leadership.

**Allow for flexibility:** The Foundation encourages flexibility in the way projects are designed, implemented, and modified. We recognize that many funded projects are not discrete programs, but complex, comprehensive efforts aimed at systemic community change. Therefore, evaluation approaches must not be rigid and prescriptive, or it will be difficult to document the incremental, complex, and often subtle changes that occur over the life of an initiative. Instead, evaluation plans should take an emergent approach, adapting and adjusting to the needs of an evolving and complex project.

**Build Capacity:** Evaluation should be concerned not only with specific outcomes, but also with the skills, knowledge, and perspectives acquired by the individuals who are involved with the projects/cluster. The Foundation encourages ongoing self-reflection and dialogue on the part of every person involved with evaluation in order to reach increasingly sophisticated understandings of the projects, clusters, and initiatives being evaluated. Specifically, the Foundation expects that:

- Everyone involved in project, cluster, and initiative evaluation spends time thinking about and discussing how personal assumptions and beliefs affect his or her philosophy of evaluation; and
- Everyone (particularly those in leadership positions, such as project directors, evaluators, board members, Kellogg program directors) reflects on the values and politics embed in the process, and honestly examines how these influence what is focused on and what is missed; who is heard and not heard; how interpretations are made; what conclusions are drawn; and how they are presented.

The Foundation's vision for evaluation is rooted in the conviction that evaluation and management are inextricably linked. In fact, we believe that "good evaluation" is nothing more than "good thinking."

Effective evaluation is not an "event" that occurs at the end of a project or initiative, but is an ongoing process which helps decision makers better understand the project or initiative; how it is impacting participants, partner agencies, and the community; and how it is being influenced by both internal and external factors. Thinking of evaluation tools in this way allows people to collect and analyze important data for decision making throughout the life of a project or initiative.

The Foundation also believes that evaluation should not be conducted simply to *prove* that a project or initiative worked, but also to *improve* the way it works. Therefore, evaluation should not be viewed only as an accountability measuring stick imposed on projects, but rather as management and learning tools for projects and initiatives, for the Foundation, and for practitioners in the field who can benefit from the experiences of other projects and initiatives.

## **The Tools Cluster Evaluation Guiding Principles**

The Tools for Nonprofit Sustainability and Innovative Giving cluster (Tools cluster) evaluation is guided by the following principles:

- **Unobtrusive**: The evaluation plan is as unobtrusive as possible for the members of the cluster.
- **Accommodate Different Levels of Evaluation**: The evaluation plan takes into account the various levels of evaluation among projects. For example, we should not ask a member doing a Level 4 project evaluation to collect data in the same manner as a member implementing a Level 1 project evaluation. These evaluation levels are explained in Appendix A.
- **Involve Members in Decision Making**: Cluster members will be involved in determining what data is appropriate to collect for their project and what additional data collection they may participate in to address the questions of interest.
- **Technical Assistance**: Technical assistance is available to cluster members, as needed and desirable, to assure that project-level data sets and appropriate analyses are available for the cluster-level evaluation.

Cluster evaluation serves two stakeholders. The most obvious stakeholder is the grant-maker - WKKF. Trustees and program staff need to know what worked and what did not work. An equally important stakeholder however, is the grant-receiving organization. Cluster evaluation is useful as a management and learning tool. Among the benefits that come from the cluster evaluation are:

- Accountability to various stakeholder groups.
- Exploration and development of performance metrics.
- Exploration of links and opportunities for networking with other members.
- Availability of technical assistance to inform or improve project evaluation efforts, particularly in relation to the primary groups of interest.

## **The Relationship of Cluster Evaluation to Project and Initiative Evaluation**

There are three types of evaluation related to the Tools cluster: a) project-level evaluation, b) cluster evaluation, and c) initiative evaluation.

**Project-level.** According to *The Evaluation Handbook* (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 1998), project-level evaluation is defined as “the evaluation that project directors are responsible for locally. The project director, with appropriate staff, and with input from [board members] and other relevant stakeholders, determines the critical evaluation questions, decides whether to use an internal evaluator or hire and external consultant, and conducts and guides the project-level evaluation. The primary goal of project-level evaluation is to improve and strengthen funded projects.”

The type of evaluation required of a project is determined to a large extent by the Program Director assigned to a project, who directs projects to use one of 4 levels of

evaluation (see Appendix A). Within the current Tools cluster, two projects are at Level 1, five are at Level 2, ten are at Level 3, and three are at Level 4.

**Cluster-level.** In general, the information collected through cluster evaluation is used to enhance the effectiveness of grant-making, clarify the strategies of a particular programming approach, and inform public policy debates. The cluster evaluation looks across a group of projects to identify common threads and themes that, having cross-confirmation, take on greater significance. Cluster evaluation is a means of determining how well the specific projects which constitute the Tools cluster, a sub-set of the funded projects in the Build Tools for Nonprofit Sustainability and Innovative Giving Approach, fulfill the objective of systemic change.

According to the Kellogg Evaluation Handbook, “Cluster evaluation is not a substitute for project-level evaluation, nor do cluster evaluators ‘evaluate’ projects. Project-level evaluation is focused on project development and outcomes related to the project stakeholders.” The cluster evaluation focuses on progress made toward achieving the broad goals of the programming initiative. Project-level data collected and reported is one potential source for cluster-level evaluation data. It is desirable for project-level evaluation to be aligned with the cluster evaluation data needs; however this may not always be possible due to the different levels of project evaluation, the different project and evaluation purposes, and the different evaluation questions explored by the projects in the cluster.

**Initiative-level.** In the case of the Unleashing Resources initiative, of which the Tools cluster is a component of one of three approaches, there is also an initiative-level evaluation. The initiative-level evaluation is a higher-order evaluation that determines how well the various approaches of the initiative fulfill the objective of systemic change. The initiative-level evaluation is used to enhance the effectiveness of grant-making, clarify the strategies of major programming initiatives, and inform public policy debates. Cluster-level evaluation data is one potential source for initiative-level evaluation data. It is desirable for cluster-level and initiative-level evaluations to be aligned; however the different purposes of evaluation influence the focus of data collection and reporting.

## **Section 2:**

### **Tools Cluster Logic Model**

A logic model provides a picture of how an organization does its work; of the theory and assumptions that guide the program. The logic model links the intended outcomes of a program (both short and long term) with various program activities and processes, as well as the theoretical assumptions and principles of the program. The logic model guides not only program planning and design, but the program implementation, staff training and development, as well as evaluation. It communicates a program’s design and intended outcomes to various stakeholder groups in a clear, concise, and brief manner.

## Tools Cluster Logic Model

Issues/Opportunities	Strategies	Outcomes	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Resources in all sectors are highly fragmented which causes duplication, unnecessary competition and waste in general. (Sustainability)</li> <li>▶ The outdated support infrastructure for organized philanthropy and non-profit sector is not built for nor aligned with knowledge management needs of today. New support infrastructure or reinvention of current/old structure is needed. (Innovative Giving, Sustainability)</li> <li>▶ This “disconnection” is further exacerbated by lack of perspectives from diverse populations and sectors. (Innovative Giving, Sustainability)</li> <li>▶ Connecting innovators to help catalyze momentum will yield new ways of giving. (Innovative Giving)</li> <li>▶ Many new networks and organizations are in a fragile state and need support. (Sustainability)</li> <li>▶ Emerging leaders and donors are seeking information and tools for new ways to give. (Innovative Giving, Sustainability)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Improving philanthropic work</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Connect Tools cluster work with leaders and knowledge approaches through access to, application of and utilization of tools -- particularly by communities of color, women and youth</li> <li>▶ Make grants to create or improve tools/infrastructure</li> <li>▶ Foster synergy among grantees through convening, providing technical assistance, intervening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Developed and strengthened tools that support the non-profit sector</li> <li>▶ Increased accessibility to and use of tools by non-profit sector -- particularly the 3 primary population groups</li> <li>▶ Formed a value-added community of practice and increased partnership activities among the members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Non-profits’ sustainability is improved.</li> <li>▶ Innovative ways of giving are advanced.</li> </ul>

### **Section 3:**

## **Tools Cluster Evaluation Questions and Sub-questions**

On the following pages, the cluster evaluation outcomes (from the logic model on the previous page), questions, and sub-questions are listed. Also listed are potential choices for methods that may be used to collect the information.

These are questions that we will attempt to answer for the cluster, not for each individual project. Since each project is unique, we do not expect that every one will be able to answer every question – rather, that each project will contribute the information it has, and together with other projects, and even independent data collection, we will be able to gather sufficient information to answer the questions.

### Section 3: Tools Cluster Evaluation Questions and Sub-questions

#### Outcome 1: Developed and strengthened Tools that support the nonprofit sector.

**Evaluation Question(s): What Tools have been developed/strengthened? Why? By whom? What strategies/processes informed the development and strengthening of the Tools?**

Evaluation Sub-Questions	Survey	Interview	Focus Group	Document Review	Secondary Data	Database Search
a. Could you describe the Tool(s) you developed or strengthened as a result of your WKKF funding? Please provide the characteristics of the Tool(s) developed as well as the rationale for its development. What are its unique features in comparison to other similar Tools available at the time it was developed/now?		X		X		
b. What was the process of development and implementation for the Tool(s)?		X		X		
c. What strategies/processes have informed the continued development of the Tool(s)? What stumbling blocks were faced along the way?		X		X		
d. How has your Tool worked/not worked? For whom and in what circumstances?		X		X		
e. What lessons have you learned about developing and implementing the Tool(s)?		X		X		
f. How have contextual factors impacted the development, implementation, success, and stumbling blocks of the Tool(s)?		X		X		

**Outcome 2: Increased accessibility to and use of tools by nonprofit sector (A) – particularly the 3 primary population groups (B).**

**Evaluation Question(s) A: To what extent are the tools developed accessible and used in the nonprofit sector? By whom? How are Tools being made accessible? How are Tools being used?**

Evaluation Sub-Questions	Survey	Interview	Focus Group	Document Review	Secondary Data	Database Search
a. Who is using your Tool(s)? Is there a particular niche for this Tool? (e.g. nonprofit organizations [type], government agencies [type], foundations, etc.) What is the number of users by category, frequency of use by the various segments of your profile of users, and number of new users during the period?	X	X		X		
b. If changes or improvements have been made to your organization's Tools over the period of the cluster, have they increased its audience? Changed the niche?		X		X		
c. Is there any established mechanism or system for managing and disseminating the Tool(s) developed through the WKKF funding? If so, please describe. Can you share a story about accessibility and utilization of the Tool(s)?		X	X	X		
d. What are the primary venues for disseminating the tools developed? Do they include training, websites, publication, or networking? What is the frequency of use for the various venues?		X	X	X		
e. Do you believe the dissemination mechanism or system has improved since you received WKKF funding? If so, how?		X	X	X		
f. How do you evaluate the friendliness/perceived effectiveness of the Tool(s) developed? Did you receive any positive or negative feedback from the Tool users? Is so, please illustrate with one or two examples.	X	X	X	X		
g. Since receiving funding from WKKF, how many resources (time, money, know-how) have you provided to various Tool users?	X	X		X		
h. Since receiving funding from WKKF, how many resources (time, money, know-how) have been generated for the benefit of the nonprofit sector through the use of your Tool?	X	X		X		
i. Can you share two stories that illustrate the utilization of your Tool(s) in the field of philanthropy?		X		X		

Evaluation Sub-Questions	Survey	Interview	Focus Group	Document Review	Secondary Data	Database Search
j. Can you provide statistics showing the impact of the Tool(s) developed (such as amount of giving in terms of money, time, or know-how)?	X	X		X		
k. On a scale of one to ten, with ten being the highest, how do you rate the level of accessibility, usefulness, applicability, respectively, of Tools developed?	X	X		X		

**Evaluation Question(s) B: To what extent are the tools developed accessible and used by the 3 primary population groups? Why or why not? How are the 3 primary population groups using/accessing the tools?**

Evaluation Sub-Questions	Survey	Interview	Focus Group	Document Review	Secondary Data	Database Search
a. Do the tools your organization developed or strengthened as a result of WKKF funding contribute to the visibility and engagement in philanthropy of the following three groups: women, youth, and communities of color? Foster relationships between the primary groups and the facilitating groups? If so, how?		X	X			
b. Could you tell us one success story illustrating that, with the help of the tools developed, the primary groups are becoming more visible and engaged in the field of philanthropy/influence the general practice of philanthropy?		X	X			
c. Could you tell us one success story illustrating that, with the help of the tools developed, the primary groups, facilitating groups, and the philanthropic field in general are more efficient in their work (able to reduce duplication, unnecessary competition, and waste in general)?		X	X			
d. Could you tell us one success story that illustrates the role of the new/strengthened Tools in helping the primary groups influence the general practice of philanthropy?		X	X			
e. What, if any, concrete efforts do you make to help the primary groups identify and use your tool? <i>Identify and access real opportunities for social change?</i>		X	X			

Evaluation Sub-Questions	Survey	Interview	Focus Group	Document Review	Secondary Data	Database Search
f. Could you tell us one success story that illustrates the role of the new tools in helping the primary groups <i>identify and access real opportunities for social change</i> ?		X	X			
g. Who, among the primary groups is using your Tool(s)? Is there a particular niche for this Tool? What is the number of users by category, frequency of use by the various primary groups/facilitating groups, and number of new users during the period?		X	X	X		
h. Is there any established mechanism or system for managing and disseminating the Tool(s) developed through the WKKF funding to the primary/facilitating groups? If so, please describe. Can you share a story about accessibility and utilization of the Tool(s) among the groups of interest?		X	X			
i. What are the primary venues for disseminating the tools developed to the groups of interest? Do they include training, websites, publication, or networking? What is the frequency of use by group for the various venues?	X	X		X		
j. Do you believe the dissemination mechanism or system to reach the groups of interest has improved since you received WKKF funding? If so, how?		X	X			
k. What strategies/processes have informed the continued development of the Tool(s) in order to reach the groups of interest? What stumbling blocks were faced along the way?		X	X			
l. Since receiving WKKF funding, did your organization develop any new tools that have helped the primary groups identify and access real opportunities for social change? If so, what were they?		X	X	X		

**Outcome 3: Formed a value-added community of practice and increased partnership activities among the Tools cluster members.**

**Evaluation Question(s) A: To what extent has a community of practice formed among Tools grantees? How has it formed? Why or why not? What value have Tools grantees derived from participating in and contributed to the community of practice? Why or why not? How?**

Evaluation Sub-Questions	Survey	Interview	Focus Group	Document Review	Secondary Data	Database Search
a. Was the Tools cluster successfully transformed into a community of practice (CoP)? Why or why not?	X	X	X			
b. How did contextual factors impact the development, implementation, success, and stumbling blocks encountered in the development of the CoP?		X	X			
c. What do your experiences in the Tools cluster/CoP mean to you?		X	X			
d. Can you tell us a story that illustrates learning you derived from participation in the Tools cluster that has influenced the development of your Tool? That has influenced your organization?		X	X			
e. What lessons have been learned about developing a CoP?		X	X			
f. What was the process of development and implementation for the CoP?		X	X			
g. How did the CoP work/not work? For whom and in what circumstances?		X	X			
h. What strategies/processes informed the continued development of the CoP?		X	X	X		

**Evaluation Question(s) B: To what extent has partnering increased among the Tools grantees? How has the community of practice influenced partnering activity within the cluster?**

<b>Evaluation Sub-Questions</b>	<b>Survey</b>	<b>Interview</b>	<b>Focus Group</b>	<b>Document Review</b>	<b>Secondary Data</b>	<b>Database Search</b>
a. To what extent were you aware of and had you partnered with others grantees in the Tools cluster prior to WKKF funding? Since WKKF funding?	X	X				
b. What aspects of participation in the Tools cluster have influenced your partnering behavior and how? Has your partnering behavior increased/decreased?	X	X	X			
c. How did contextual factors impact your partnering behavior/success, and what you're your stumbling blocks in this regard?		X	X			
d. Can you tell a story that illustrates the value you derived from engaging in partnering? Describe both the impact on you and on your organization.		X	X			
e. What lessons have been learned about partnering? What are barriers/facilitators to partnering?		X	X			

## **Section 4:**

### **Instrumentation Design, Data Collection Methods, and Timeline**

**9/1/03 to 8/31/04**

Alignment with Project Evaluations – September - October, 2003, the cluster evaluator will discuss with cluster members the alignment of their project evaluations with the cluster-level evaluation. This alignment will be sensitive to the projects' Evaluation Level (see Appendix A). **Project role:** participate in a scheduled interview.

Document Review – Documents and reports that projects submit to the Foundation and the cluster evaluator are reviewed to glean information that addresses the evaluation questions of interest. The first report is scheduled for September, 2003. Subsequent reports will be prepared every six months. **Project role:** submit reports in timely fashion to WKKF.

Assess Community of Practice – Between September and November, the cluster evaluator will conduct a review of literature about communities of practice and develop instrumentation for implementation during the cluster's lifespan. **Project role:** none.

Networking Meeting Assessment – The networking meetings (October, 2003 and March 2004) will be primary data collection points for questions concerning the development of a community of practice. In addition, evaluation of networking meetings will inform program management and decision making. Methods may include participant interviews/evaluation forms, a program observation schedule, importance-performance data, participant satisfaction data, focus groups, and program staff evaluation forms. **Project role:** participate in networking meeting assessment activities.

Focus Groups – Focus groups will explore evaluation questions best addressed by such means (see Section 3). If possible, three focus groups will be scheduled between November 2003 and January 2004. We anticipate east coast, Midwest, and west coast locations. **Project role:** participate in one regional focus group meeting.

Surveys – Periodically members will be asked to participate in surveys that address evaluation questions not being answered through the document review. In particular, specific numerical data concerning the target groups may be gathered in this manner. **Project role:** participate in surveys.

Evaluation Plan Revision – In keeping with the Foundation's principle of flexibility, the evaluation plan will be reviewed and revised annually. In early summer, 2004, the cluster evaluator will seek input from the members participating in the evaluation to assure it addresses the questions of interest and informs the work of projects. **Project role:** provide input when asked.

## Appendix A

### Guidelines for Determining Evaluation Levels for Individual Grants

#### Level One

<i>Factors to Consider</i>	<i>Implications</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Potential for significant learning for WKKF and/or in the field</i></li> <li>• <i>Unique approach – innovative or high-risk approach that needs rigorous/complex evaluation to establish efficacy</i></li> <li>• <i>Significant policy implications</i></li> <li>• <i>Need to identify “best practice”</i></li> <li>• <i>High interest in replication</i></li> <li>• <i>Pivotal/key to long-term goals of the program area</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Typically requires an external evaluators, unless there is a compelling reason otherwise</i></li> <li>• <i>Use of sophisticated designs (e.g., control groups, time-series, other quasi-experimental designs)</i></li> <li>• <i>Evaluation line item budget at 8-10% +/- of total project budget (who an explicit statement of who is paying for it)</i></li> </ul>

#### Level Two

<i>Factors to Consider</i>	<i>Implications</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Potential for moderate learning for WKKF and/or the field</i></li> <li>• <i>Potential for learning about implementation shortfalls.</i></li> <li>• <i>Related to long-term goals of the program area</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A formal but less rigorous evaluation design used</i></li> <li>• <i>Usually use an external evaluator</i></li> <li>• <i>Evaluation line item budget at 4-6% +/- of total project budget (or an explicit statement of who is paying for it)</i></li> </ul>

#### Level Three

<i>Factors to Consider</i>	<i>Implications</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Modest learning for WKKF and/or the field – narrow questions of content and practice</i></li> <li>• <i>Document activities and outcomes</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>May be specific evaluation questions, but answers with minimal data collection</i></li> <li>• <i>Usually done by project staff</i></li> <li>• <i>Evaluation line item budget at 3-4%, but may be subsumed under Personnel budget line item</i></li> </ul>

#### Level Four

<i>Factors to Consider</i>	<i>Implications</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Low potential for learning</i></li> <li>• <i>Specific questions are optional</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Project Questionnaire completed by project staff upon completion of grant (grants less than \$100,000)</i></li> <li>• <i>Grantee may report on specific questions in annual and/or final narrative report (grants more than \$100,000)</i></li> <li>• <i>No separate budget for evaluation</i></li> </ul>

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