



Measuring the Hard to Measure: Qualitative Methods for Data-Driven Decision Making

Peacebuilding M&E Solutions Forum
23 October 2018

Rebecca Herrington
rherrington.devlab@gmail.com
USAID Global Development Lab and Social Impact, Inc.

This presentation is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID.) The views expressed in this presentation reflect the personal opinions of the author and are entirely the author's own. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) or the United States Government. USAID is not responsible for the accuracy of any information supplied herein.

Who Am I



Rebecca Herrington

rherrington.devlab@gmail.com

Developmental Evaluator

USAID Global Development Lab
Social Impact, Inc.

How can we best use
qualitative approaches to
manage our programs in
complexity?

What is Developmental Evaluation?

- Development Evaluation (DE) is an approach to evaluation that supports the **continuous adaptation of development interventions**.
- DE **provides evaluative thinking** and timely feedback to inform ongoing adaptation as needs, findings, and insights emerge in **complex dynamic situations**.
- The DE helps facilitate the process from findings to action in **a collaborative process** with the DE stakeholders.



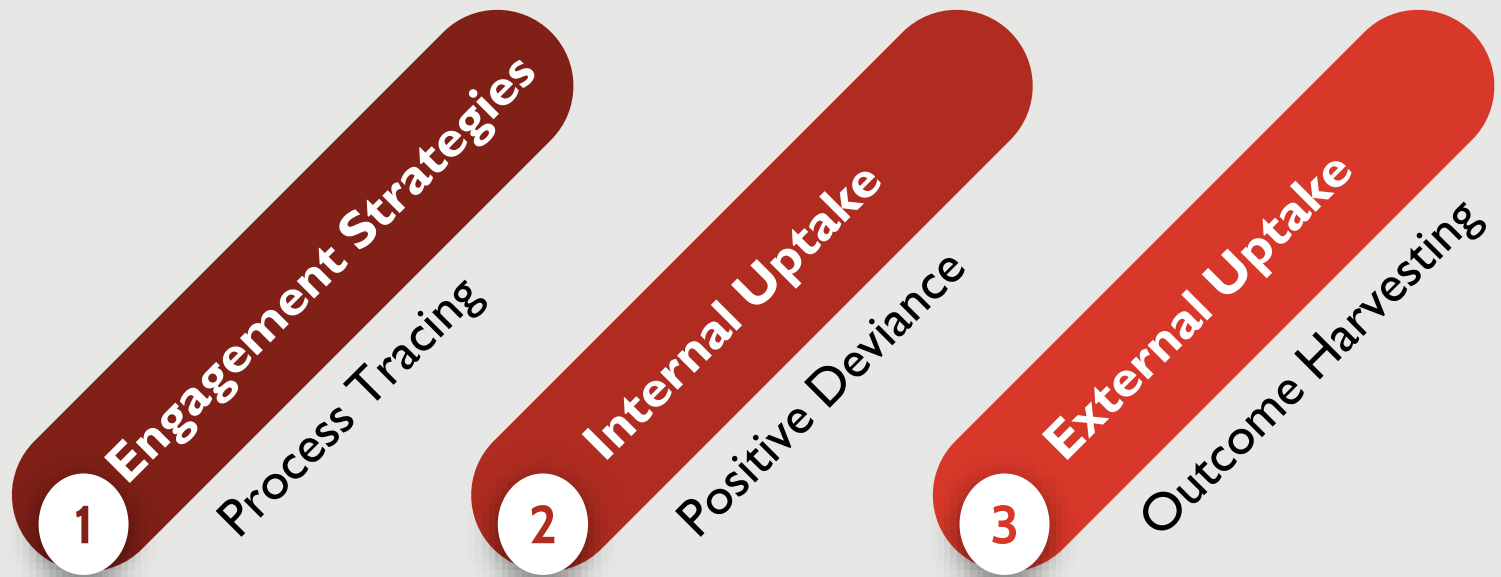
How is Developmental Evaluation different from Traditional Evaluations?

	Traditional Evaluation	Developmental Evaluation
Purpose	Supports improvement, summative test and accountability	Supports development of innovation and adaptation in dynamic environments
Standards	Methodological competence and commitment to rigor, independence, credibility with external authorities	Methodological flexibility and adaptability; systems thinking , creative and critical thinking balanced; high tolerance for ambiguity; able to facilitate rigorous evidence-based perspectives
Options	Traditional research and disciplinary standards of quality dominate options	Utilization focused : options are chosen in service to developmental use
Evaluation Results	Detailed formal reports; validated best practices, generalizable across time and space.	Rapid, real time feedback ; diverse, user-friendly forms of feedback. Evaluation aims to nurture learning.

What Does Developmental Evaluation Look Like in Practice?

Learning Objective:

How do we determine which current Lab approaches are **most effective at sustained uptake**? What has been the perceived and real value add of the approaches? What can we learn from Lab models?



Answering the Learning Objective

Process Tracing

What is Process Tracing?

		Fail	Pass	What Does That Mean?
1	Straw in the Wind	X	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low evidence to confirm or contradict• Possible rival explanations
2	Hoop	X	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence is sufficient to affirm but not confirm• Possibly significant number of rival explanations
3	Smoking Gun	X	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence confirms hypothesis• Rival explanations have weak evidence
4	Doubly Decisive	X	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Significant evidence confirms hypothesis and eliminates others• No rival explanations

Why did we use Process Tracing?

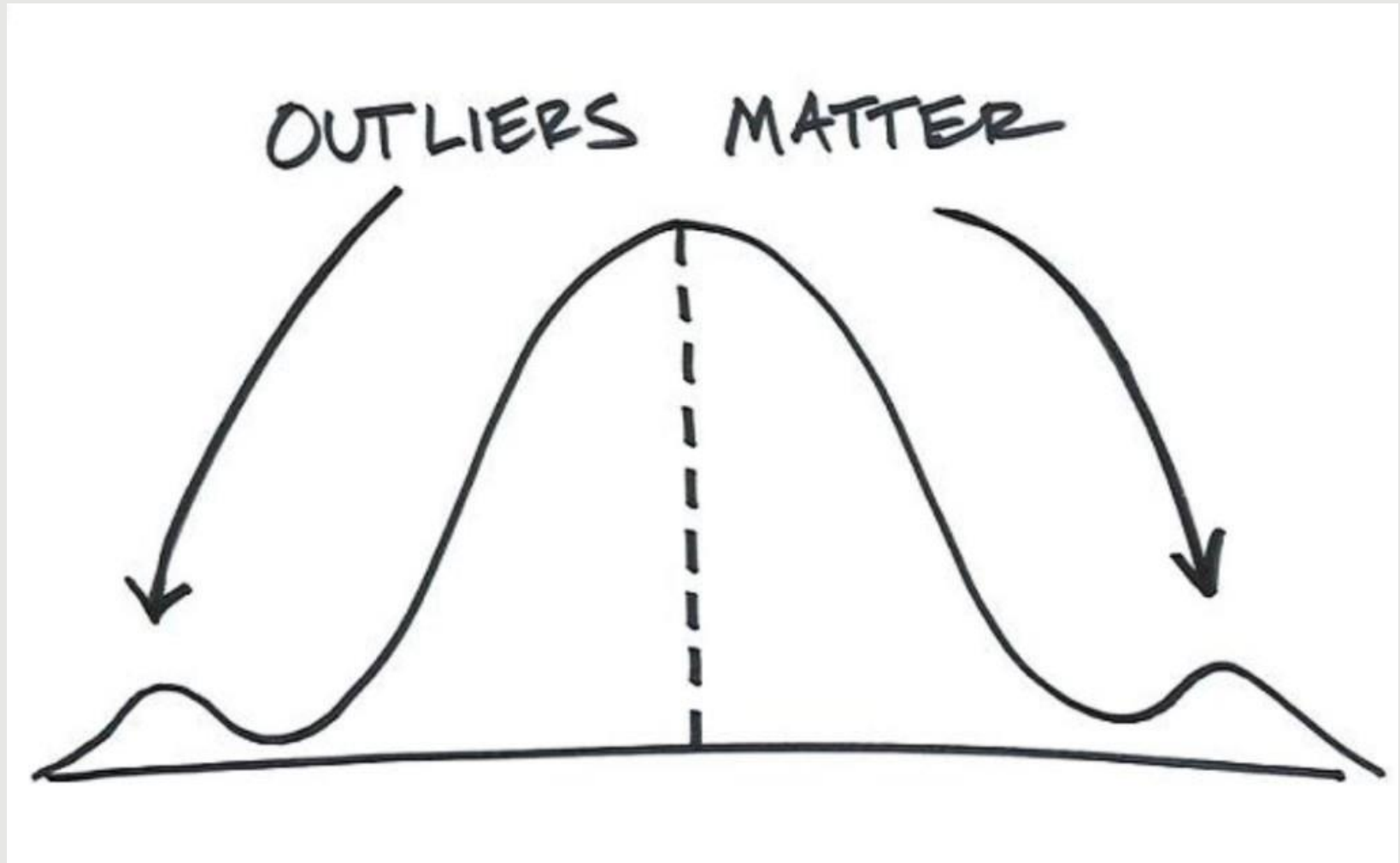
- A few different processes- trying to determine which were effective and efficient
- Differing assertions on the importance of influencing variables
- Non-traditional, unconfirmed approaches that looked potentially more effective
- Rigorous qualitative method that would legitimize recommendations for adaptations to existing strategies

What were the outcomes of using Process Tracing?

- Identification of effective and efficient models for engagement
- A more nuanced understanding of the barriers and enablers, with examples of how to address them
- Sufficient evidence to promote adaptations at leadership level
- A cohesive strategy/process for engagement for broader application

Positive Deviance

What is Positive Deviance?



Why did we use Positive Deviance?

- Significant number of use cases from four different models with varying success
- Many unknowns regarding the influence of contributing and contextual factors

What were the outcomes of using Positive Deviance?

- Two strong use cases that exemplified a model for sustainable uptake of innovations
- Actionable recommendations to adapt other uptake models and future engagements

Outcome Harvesting

What is Outcome Harvesting?

Design and Scope

Collect
Initial Data

Identify
Outcomes

Substantiate

Analyze
and
Interpret

Determine the scope, sampling strategy, and tools.

Document review and interviews.

Stakeholders select outcomes they want to prioritize.

Second round of data collection to assess credibility and contribution.

Analyze for trends and patterns. Interpret into actionable recommendations.

Why did we use Outcome Harvesting?

- Lots of claims of success...very little evidence
- MEL frameworks that left off outcome-level indicators
- Working with a lot of variables, so even contribution is hard



Picture from: <http://www.govint.org/our-services/outcomes/>

Common Pitfalls and Challenges

CAUTION: Expertise Required

- Developmental Evaluation is increasingly popular, but not everyone can do it.
- Developmental Evaluations are methodologically agnostic, that doesn't mean the learning questions are.
- Be systematic and make your methods fit-for-purpose.
- Leave 'stories' for the Communications Department- qualitative methods are about patterns and trends from data.
- Realize you still may have to translate qualitative findings to quantitative presentation.
- Be utilization-focused, qualitative methods should lead to more nuanced programming.

Questions?

**Interested in learning
more? Contact:**

Rebecca Herrington

rherrington.devlab@gmail.com