



Theoretical Dreams and Funding Realities: Expert Critique of Evaluation Framework for a Statewide Social Marketing Program

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Network for a Healthy California: **Vital Statistics**

- Principal Funding: Food Stamp Program, through the Farm Bill
- Objectives: Fruits and Vegetables, Physical Activity, Food Security, Obesity Prevention
- Audience: 7M parents & children out of 10M <185% FPL (37M in CA)
- In 318 of 488 eligible school districts (~1,000 in CA)
- In 2,150+ of 5,110 eligible schools (~10,000 schools in CA)
- Almost 1,300 eligible census tracts (~7,050 in CA)
- ~10,000+ service locations, 9+ different channels, 1.7B impressions
- 138 projects in 11 regions, compared to 4 projects in '96
- ~\$100 FFP and ~\$120M State share now, up from \$2.8M and \$3.1M 10 years ago



Evaluation Challenge

- IoM, CDC and WHO recommend comprehensive approaches that address “upstream” determinants of population behavior. OMB and CBO recommend coordination, evaluation.
- USDA Food Stamp Program funds the Nation’s largest nutrition social marketing enterprise but disallows public health approaches like community and school assessments, most mass media, food security, and policy-systems-and-environmental change.
- What does this mean for Networks that need to show results in the crux of this controversy?
- What components and data are truly important for programs that target individuals but also recognize the environmental context in which behavior occurs?



Evaluation Project: Overview

- RWJF funded an external qualitative critique of California's evaluation framework
- Interviews were conducted with 17 experts in multiple fields
- Interviews were transcribed and recorded, generating over 400 pages of data
- A comprehensive critique of the evaluation framework was covered; interviews followed the social-ecological model and the IoM Evaluation Framework for prevention of childhood obesity.
- Interviews were focused on maximizing evaluation for our existing program, not developing new program areas or interventions.
- This presentation focuses on how to integrate expert recommendations with funder's requirements.

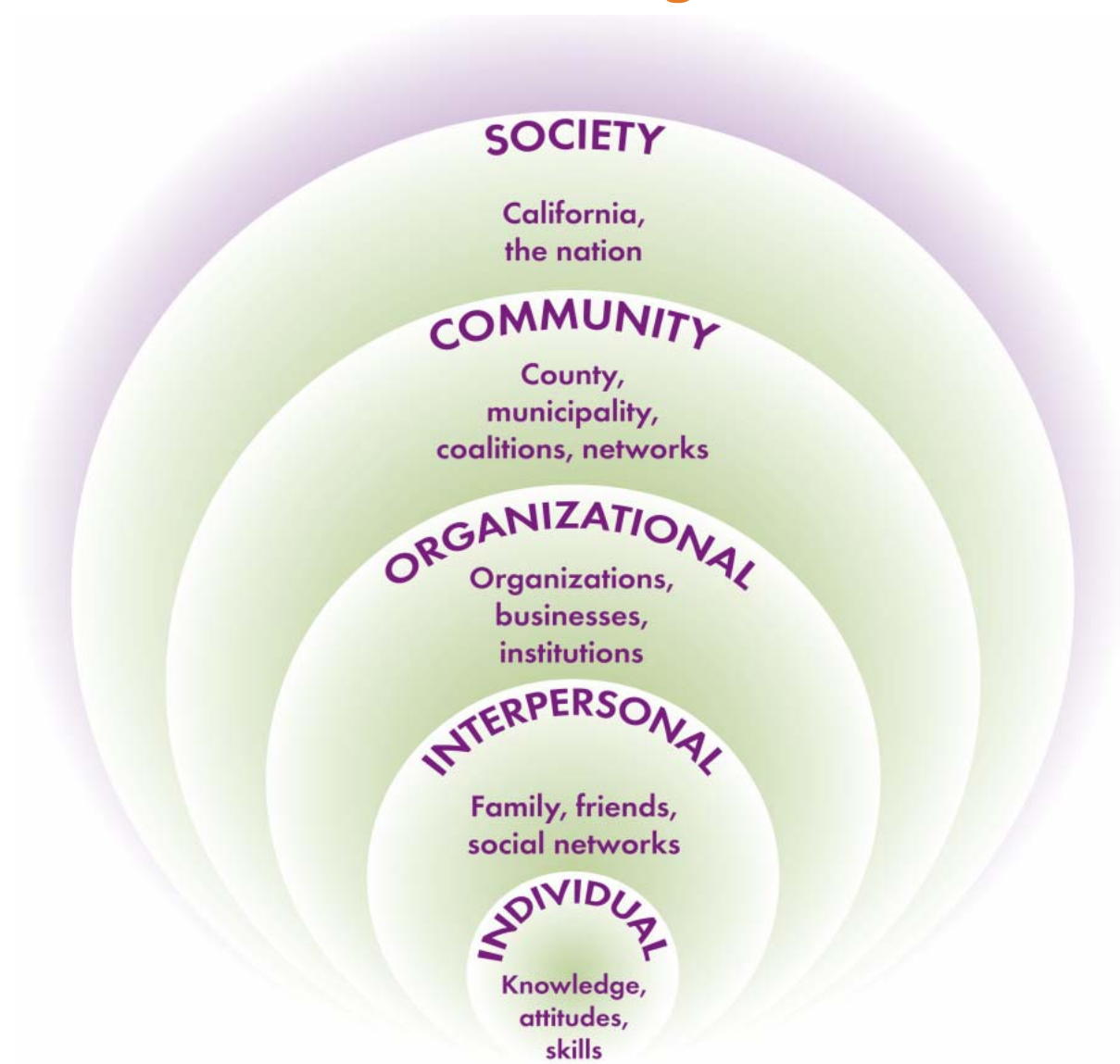


External Experts & Expertise

- Julie Baldwin, University of South Florida (Evaluation)
- George Balch, Balch and Associates (Social Marketing)
- Loren Bell, Altarum (Evaluation)
- Eric Borsum, Paine Public Relations (Communications)
- Ross Brownson, St. Louis University (Chronic Disease)
- Larry Bye, Field Research (Communications)
- Diana Cassady, U.C. Davis (Community Nutrition)
- Regino Chavez, Independent (Social Marketing)
- Anonymous, CDC (Childhood Obesity)
- Stephen Fawcett, University of Kansas (Community Development)
- Jim Hersey, RTI (Evaluation)
- Karen Jetter, UC Davis (Agricultural Economics)
- Chris Logan, ABT associates (Program Implementation)
- Linda Nebeling, NCI (Nutrition)
- Mary Story, University of Minnesota (Child Nutrition, Physical Activity)



Evaluation Framework and Discussion Guide: Social-Ecological Model



IoM Evaluation Framework

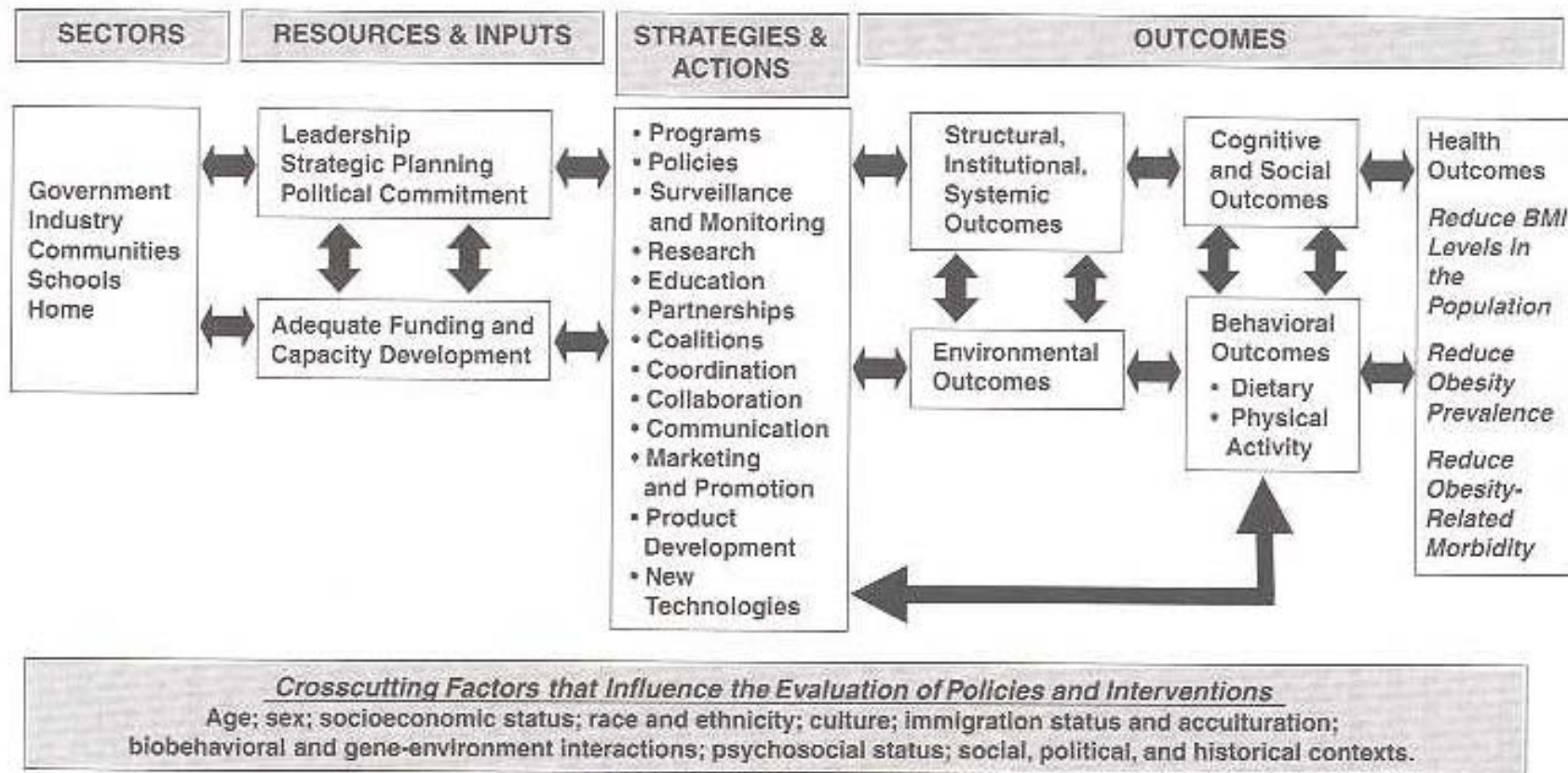


FIGURE 2-2. Evaluation framework for childhood obesity prevention policies and interventions.



Evaluation Parameters in Place

- Behavioral: 6 state surveillance surveys, pilot tests, impact evaluation
- Cognitive/social norms: media benchmark survey, opinion research but not polling, per se
- Institutional/Community: CX³ neighborhood assessment, activity tracking, process data/qualitative data from progress reports, GIS
- Policy, Systems, Environmental: GIS (parks, schools, food outlets, administrative districts, etc), state laws, organizational changes, leadership projects
- Strategies, Actions, Resources & Inputs: qualitative progress reports, new partnerships, SAAR, USDA reports



Experts Support All Components of the SEM Model

- “I think you guys have a great approach; you’ve got the right people doing it. I think ...your public health models and the approaches that I saw were terrifically impressive...”
- “Your framework works fine. It’s really more of an intervention framework, whereas when you have the word “model” it implies that it’s testable at each of these levels, and it really isn’t.”
- “You’ve been at this as a team for a long time and have figured a lot out.”



Experts Say: Understand Your Funder

- Thinking of the of USDA's mission can help one understand the context in which the FSNE *Guidance* is made.
- This does not reconcile or justify the differences with IoM; it merely frames them.
- USDA's mission is food, not health



How USDA (Probably) Sees FSNE Evaluation: Prevent Fraud

- “These are people who generally do management reviews and focus on: Is what’s going on out there following the rules? If they’re following the rules, are they having some sort of generalized impact that can be measured through fairly simple tools?”
- “You don’t have people looking at your plan from the standpoint of, ‘Are they really doing creative and great things out there?’ They look at your plan from, ‘God! Is something going to get through and get into the press that says we’re funding something with food stamp dollars that’s going to embarrass us?’”
- “If it’s perceived that there’s error or fraud or abuse, the public support for that program’s going to vanish.”



Experts: “The Nail that Sticks Up Gets Pounded Down”

- “The approach that you guys bring to things really is overwhelmingly different than other states.”
- ‘Given your difference in size, scope, approach, and everything else, it’s really hard for anyone at the national office to not look at you other than as something as an anomaly. That’s a tough position to be in.’
- “The issue is that your intervention approach is risky to the regulators.” But at the same time,
- “Networks fill a gap that traditional approaches aren’t filling.”



Individual Sphere/Behavioral Outcomes—Experts “Add Value”

- “You probably are measuring the right outcomes, but your **sample sizes** seem really small for the scope of this program. You can’t come anywhere close to being able to measure that subgroup [low-income adults] with the sample size you have.”
- “...make [data] more accessible [for] **data sharing**, to enable [other researchers] to pull part of that data and do additional analyses... create **public resource files** ...do publication, or ...**collaborations** between state agency and an academic agency.
- **Peer review publication** broadens the opportunity for people to pull and use that data for comparative purposes.”



Individual Sphere/Behavioral Outcomes—Experts “Add Value” (cont.)

- “Your population group has tremendous **ethnicity components** to it and very unique diet relationships. That’s information that is hard to obtain in many other parts of this country...[it’s] a valuable thing”
- “Have you thought about the idea of trying to **link** the survey data with the **mapping of services** that are available?”
- “Is anybody doing a **meta analysis** of all this stuff to see what we have found over time?”



Interpersonal Sphere/Social Outcomes—Experts “Add Value”

- “Invest much more in **interpersonal communication**... a really well designed **Promotoras program** could ...generate norm change among low-income mothers...”
- **Personalize outreach**... “Are these [**existing networks** of Promotoras] being used to their full capacity? **Personal outreach** to at least the Latino community would be very beneficial and probably way more successful.”



Interpersonal Sphere/Social Outcomes—Experts “Add Value”

- “I love the **direct mail** campaign ... Find ways to be in an **ongoing relationship** with these low-income mothers Invest a lot more in **neighborhood-base support and resources** and... find a way to **link local resources**.”
- “Invest much more in mail and Web-like technologies that allow **prolonged, customized communication** with people.”
- “Get measurement at the **family level**.”
- “You can argue that the **normative environment’s** probably even more important than the built, physical environment. And **media and social marketing** efforts can alter the normative environment.”





My kitchen. My rules.

Rule #1:
**Eat more fruits
and vegetables.**



For tips on obesity prevention or Food Stamp information, call 1-888-328-3483. A message from the California Department of Health Services.
Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Stamp Program.



My television. My rules.

Rule #2:
**Turn it off and
go out and play.**



For tips on obesity prevention or Food Stamp information, call 1-888-328-3483. A message from the California Department of Health Services. Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Stamp Program.



Our neighborhood. Our rules.

Rule #3:
**We speak up for
healthy changes.**



For tips on obesity prevention or Food Stamp information, call 1-888-328-3483. A message from the California Department of Health Services.
Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Stamp Program.

Mailer included:

- 14-minute DVD (English/Spanish)
- 24-page bilingual mini-magazine
- 9 bilingual Success Cards
- English and Spanish Reply Cards
- Fruit and vegetable
- Slide Guide



Institutional Sphere/ Structural, Institutional, Systemic Outcomes—Experts “Add Value”

- **Use multiple data sources together** in some way
- “Target whatever information level you have... **GIS with media media market.**”
- “You can **overlay your activities** [from the SAAR] onto your...GIS maps of a poverty or low and reduced school lunch or food stamp participation.”
- “Heavily **emphasize ...the process side** of it, including the formative research; look at process as it was being implemented [**intervention integrity**].”



Example Challenge: EARS (Education, Activity Reporting System)

The Funder's Policy, in Perspective

- “EARS evolved because USDA started spending so much on FSNE, and they couldn't give numbers to anyone.”
- “EARS was to have something to count, trying to figure a way. “

Expert Response

- Get a **consultant**, possibly **coordinate the Western Region**
- **Maintain your own program evaluation**
 - “EARS is one more administrative activity that [like] the planning and approval processes, will take a lot of time... It may satisfy some administrative needs within FNS to count things, but [not] evaluation “
- Be ready to **frame your findings** to USDA
 - “You're going to have to do some work to provide the context. It's **incumbent** on you to do some stuff **to make some sense.**”



Example Challenge: Media

The Funder's Policy

- Media-buys for adults are restricted to highly targeted, low-income dense programs and outlets; children's media do not qualify
- Limits TV; favors outdoor and Spanish-language
- Allows no middle- or higher-income comparison groups

Expert Response

- **It actually costs MORE** to make a targeted media-buy [that reaches fewer people] than one with a more inclusive area
- Current rules provide **no way to assess impact** and see if lower-income population is more affected by media (positive or negative) than higher income



Community Sphere/Environmental Outcomes—Experts “Add Value”

- “**Participation, self-direction, ownership**, those are the kinds of things you want to be looking for.”
- “The people who plan the program, the festival, ...have to have some involvement in both what they’re trying to do and how they evaluate it...There are a number of words for this: **collaborative evaluation, participative evaluation**. Is this something you’re throwing at people, or **are people are coming to own and feel is about and for them?**”
- “If you’re interested in **capacity of communities to adopt and carry out CX³ strategies, look at their effectiveness and how they could be sustained** once funding is over...this is a whole area where you might want to do some **more qualitative research...**”



Social Structure, Environment and Policy Sphere/Strategies, Actions, Resources & Inputs

Current Situation

- Funder allows policy/environmental change activities only when conducted by low-income consumers
- **But**, we have state-level leadership, interest, infrastructure
- Local infrastructure growing in county health departments, larger-scale changes in institutions, programs, systems, partnerships
- For example, “state share” budget grew from \$3.1M to \$120M in 10 years
- Still, no clear, practical answers on how to capture “outer sphere” changes and “strategies/action” successes on large, diverse scale



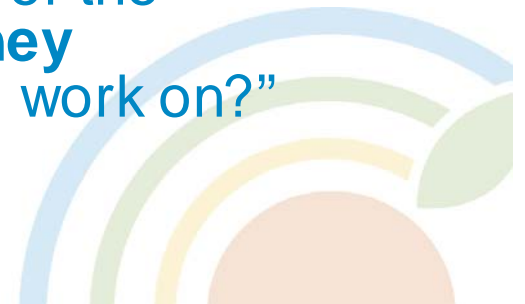
Social Structure, Environment and Policy Sphere, Strategies and Actions – Experts “Add Value”

- “Really **keep track of policy or organizational changes**, and you can write those up as **case studies** and summarize those.”
- “The **built environment** is very important at least to have some **basic level of access and built-in environment variables** for this kind of project.
- In epidemiology terms, the environmental policy variables are **necessary but not necessarily sufficient.**”
- “**We don’t know which** policy or environmental approaches in communities **would be most effective.**”



Social Structure, Environment and Policy Sphere/Strategies and Actions— Experts “Add Value”

- “I’d focus on **partnerships as catalysts** for creating healthy environments.”
- “Expand the partnership and **networking**. Can you **move out towards partnerships with other institutions?**”
- “You could approach **community partnerships or coalitions** on what kind of impact they’re having. Are they actually **getting on the policy agenda**,... is **legislation** being introduced along the lines of the policy they want it to promote? How **have they identified something** that they are going to work on?”



Experts: Work with Funder's Limitations, without Being Limited

- Use **vocabulary** that is familiar and not alarming – “access” is an ag-econ term, instead of “environment”
- **Publish** the work you do, including research, collateral materials, etc. to get external support and validation
 - **Presentations and conferences** are good dissemination outlets for media work and formative research
 - **Journal articles and citable sources** are important for program evaluation and surveillance work, and other programs look to the published literature for this information
- **Get outside financial support or partners** to work at the “outer” levels. Do whatever it takes to get the resources, but do work there!



Reflections of a Practitioner

- The SEM and IoM are great, but alignment's tough
- Integration and synergy are gold, but how to measure?
- The field is evolving, for example:
 - Built environment, especially for food, and GIS as evaluation tool are hot!
 - Surveillance systems for change in norms, empowerment, neighborhoods, partnerships do not yet exist
 - The environment is fluid, yet how can one track “the competition” and secular trends within evaluation projects?
 - The potential of business measures is untapped (scanner data, ad reports, menu censuses, media)
 - Policy levers at local, state levels are just emerging
- USDA has restrictions, as do many funders — perhaps create an evaluation “gap analysis” and strive to understand or fill the gaps
- The practical application of good evaluation is complex, nuanced, labor-intensive and incredibly tough ... and critical



With Thanks to Our Partners ...

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- The California Department of Social Services, Food Stamp team for their sustained confidence
- Local public, non-profit and business partners for their inspiration and leadership
- State colleagues for competence, imagination, resilience, and passion



For More on Interventions and Evaluation, Please Visit Us—

For partners, professionals and links to campaigns, programs and resources —
www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net

New and growing! For parents and youth, in English and Spanish —
www.cachampionsforchange.net

