

Evaluating Public Participation Programs



One evaluator's experience

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Introduction

- The case in question
- Finding and selecting an evaluation framework
- The Institute for Food Research Toolkit
- The advantages and disadvantages of the IFR Evaluation Checklist
- The Checklist in action



Keywords for literature search

1	2	3	4
Public	Participat*	Benchmark*	Policy
Citizen*	Engage*	Indicator*	National
Civil society	Consult*	Measur*	
NGO*	Input	Evaluat*	
Client*	Involvement	Assess*	
Stakeholder*		Variable*	
Community		Satisfaction	
		Success*	
		Results	
		Outcome*	

How to evaluate?



Scientific inquiry

- define criteria, and choose variables and indicators
- develop an instrument(s) to measure the indicators
- pilot, pre-test, and trial the instrument
- describe the method to allow replication by fellow researchers, and
- publish in a peer reviewed journal



Defining Evaluation Criteria

- Is successful public participation:
- a means to making better decisions about policies and programs?
 - *An instrumental argument*
 - a democratic end in itself?
 - *A normative argument*
 - or both a means and an end?

The IFR Evaluation Toolkit



- *acceptance criteria:*

- representativeness
- independence
- early involvement
- influence
- transparency

- *process criteria:*

- resource use
- task definition
- structured decision making
- cost-effectiveness

Rowe, Marsh and Frewer, 2001, Institute for Food Research, UK



The Evaluation Checklist

Advantages

1. Ready-made tool available for free from the IFR
2. reflects democratic and decision-making criteria
3. criteria validated through a scientific survey process
4. tested on nine participation processes in the UK



The Evaluation Checklist

Advantages

5. designed to be diagnostic – to identify areas for improvement
6. designed to collate information collected from a variety of sources, such as interviews, documents, etc.
7. results from this evaluation can be fed back into the IFR's further research as part of their on-going research program



The Evaluation Checklist

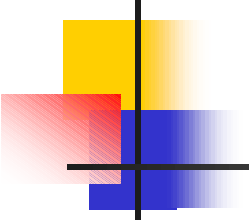
Disadvantages:

- The Checklist itself is not a validated instrument
- measures on the Checklist are rated according to a subjective reading by the evaluator, based on primary sources (interviews) and secondary sources (documents), rather than quantitative indicators.



Citizen engagement during the Environmental Assessment of Trade Negotiations (DFAIT) – a case study

- *notification and background information* is available to anyone via a web subscription list
- developing *policies*, not programs
- input is *speculative*, predicting impacts before they occur
- submissions are *mainly written*
- consultations are *iterative*
- *transparency is limited* by the nature of international negotiations



Criteria used for this evaluation

- **Early Involvement**
- **Transparency**
- **Influence**
- **Representativeness**
- **Task Definition**
- **Resource Use**
- **Structured Decision Making**



Criteria not used

- Eliminated from IFR list:
 - **Independence**
 - **Cost-effectiveness**
- Missing from IFR list:
 - **Deliberative qualities**



Methodology for this study

- Review documents
- Conduct 7 structured interviews
- Analyze responses
- Identify key successes and challenges for each criteria and discuss at DFAIT workshop
- Use the Evaluation Checklist measures to score the 7 criteria



Making findings palatable

- Findings were stated as challenges to individual criteria, not challenges to the program
- Each challenge was balanced with a success
- Tradeoffs were highlighted
- Graphic representations



An example...

Task definition			
Context	Was the context of this exercise clearly identified?	5	Framework, Background p. 1-5
Scope	Was the scope of the exercise clear and appropriate?	3	+ Scope is clear in the Framework - significant debate remains about the definition of the scope.
Aims and outputs	Were the overall aims and outputs of the exercise clear and appropriate?	4	+ Clear in Framework , -might benefit from more detailed explanation in Notification.
Rationale for exercise	Was the rationale for choosing this particular type of exercise both clear and appropriate?	2	-Not clear why written submissions preferred over face-to-face opportunities -lack of deliberative mechanisms is a shortcoming.
	AVERAGE	3.5	



Completing the Checklist...

Transparency			
Legal/ Regulatory	Did the exercise comply with both the letter and the spirit of any relevant legislation or regulations to access to information?	4	This is hard to evaluate until the draft Policy Statement and Guidelines on Consulting and Engaging Canadians are finalized, but compliance with the draft is high.
Publicity	Was there adequate publicity?	5	+Can fairly assume that the majority of interested people are following the web notices. +News releases also sent out.
Auditability	Was there a thorough audit trail, in a proper format?	0	-No. Submissions are not posted, or listed , so it is difficult to track responses to specific comments.
Availability	Was the audit trail available to all parties?	0	-No.
Accessibility	Was information available in an appropriate format, at the appropriate level of detail?	3	+Web format very accessible. -Consultant's review of web site described it as having an 'inordinately high' language level.
	AVERAGE	2.4	

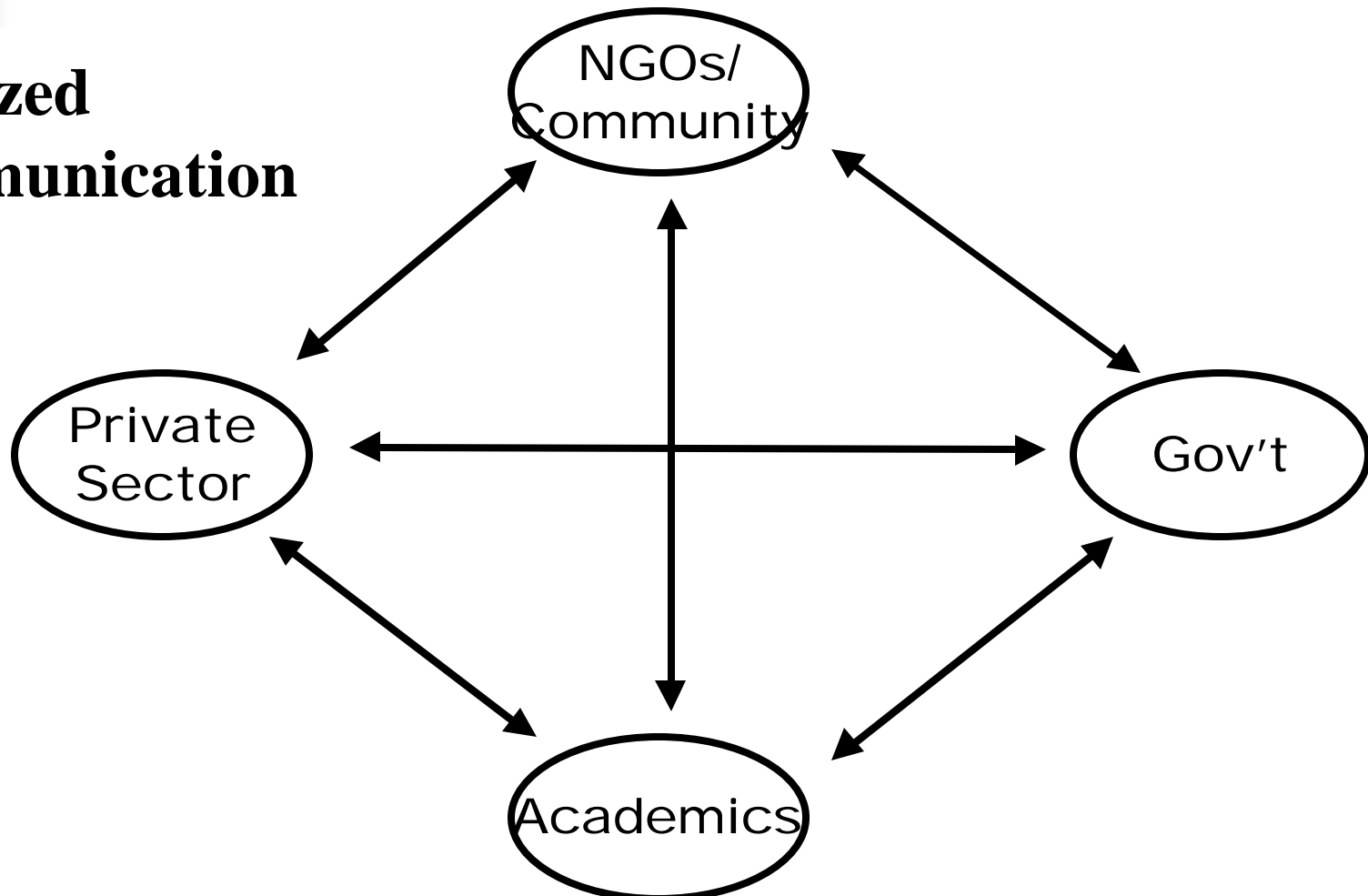


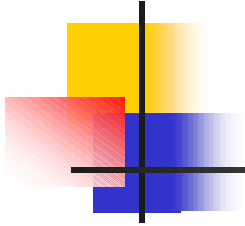
Leads to a comparison...

Success with this criteria...	... challenges this criteria
Task Definition The communications task of the EA is clearly focused on improving communication <u>between the public and the government</u> .	Transparency An opportunity to improve communications <u>between members/sectors of the public</u> is missed because the <u>inputs</u> into the process are not made public/transparent.

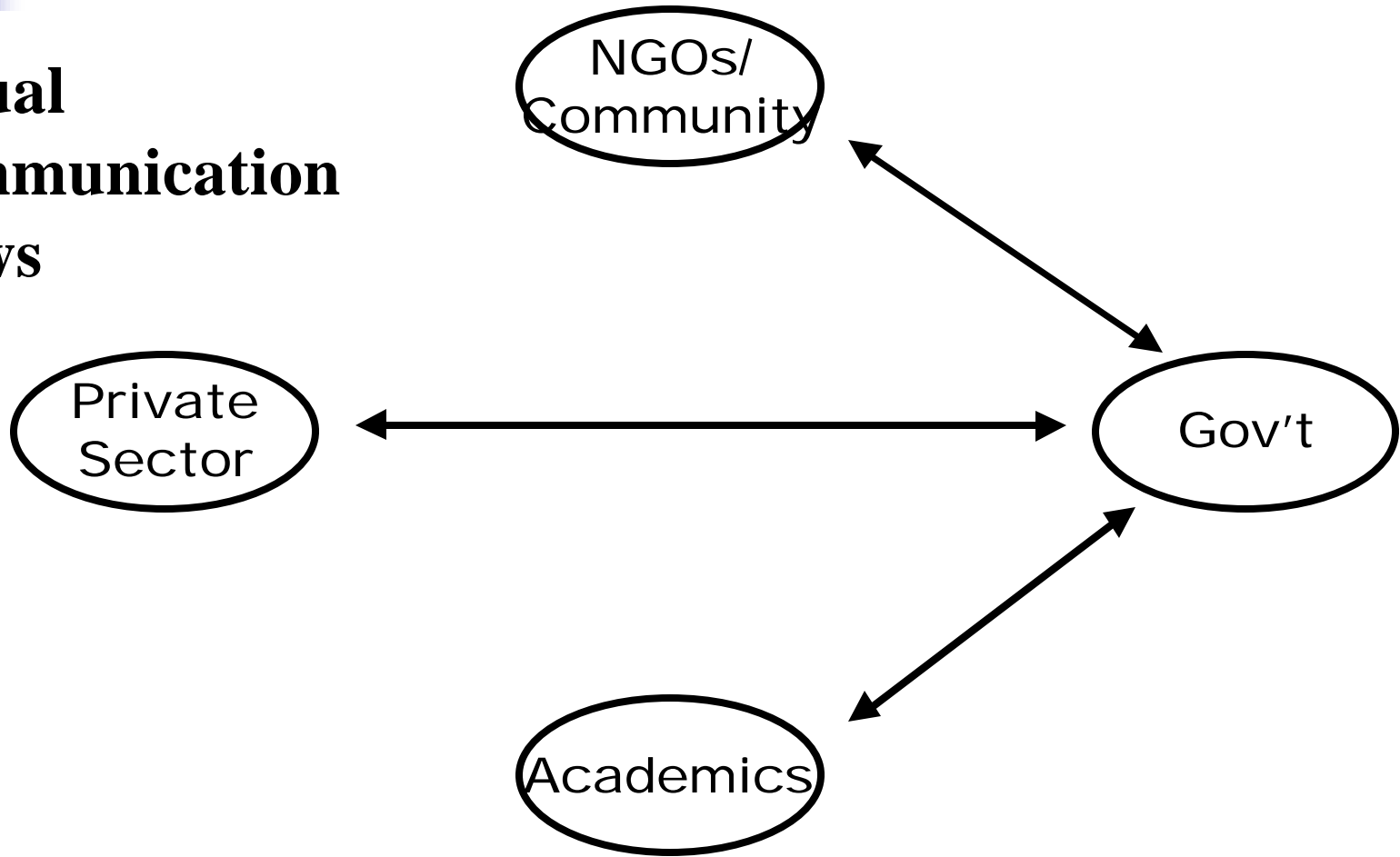
Leads to visualization...

**Idealized
Communication
Flows**





Actual Communication Flows





Leads to recommendations...

- Inputs - Post all submissions on the web site.
- Find ways to encourage or facilitate multi-stakeholder interaction



Summary

- Need to build on existing scientific work in designing evaluation frameworks
- Need more empirical testing and adaptation of evaluation frameworks
- Need for coordination/communication between evaluation academics and professionals (like today!)