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There is not a direct relationship between size of evaluation budget and importance of an evaluation project. That said, small projects present a set of unique challenges – and also opportunities to be creatively efficient in evaluation.

KEY POINTS AND HELPFUL TIPS

- 1. Putting small in perspective:** Before you do anything, write your goals for the project and its components. Setting these goals will help you understand where and how this “small” project fits into those goals. Remember, the key aspect of research is to reduce uncertainty in making a decision. If a “small” project does that for you, it could be considered successful, and it certainly would be considered useful. (See Figure 1 below)

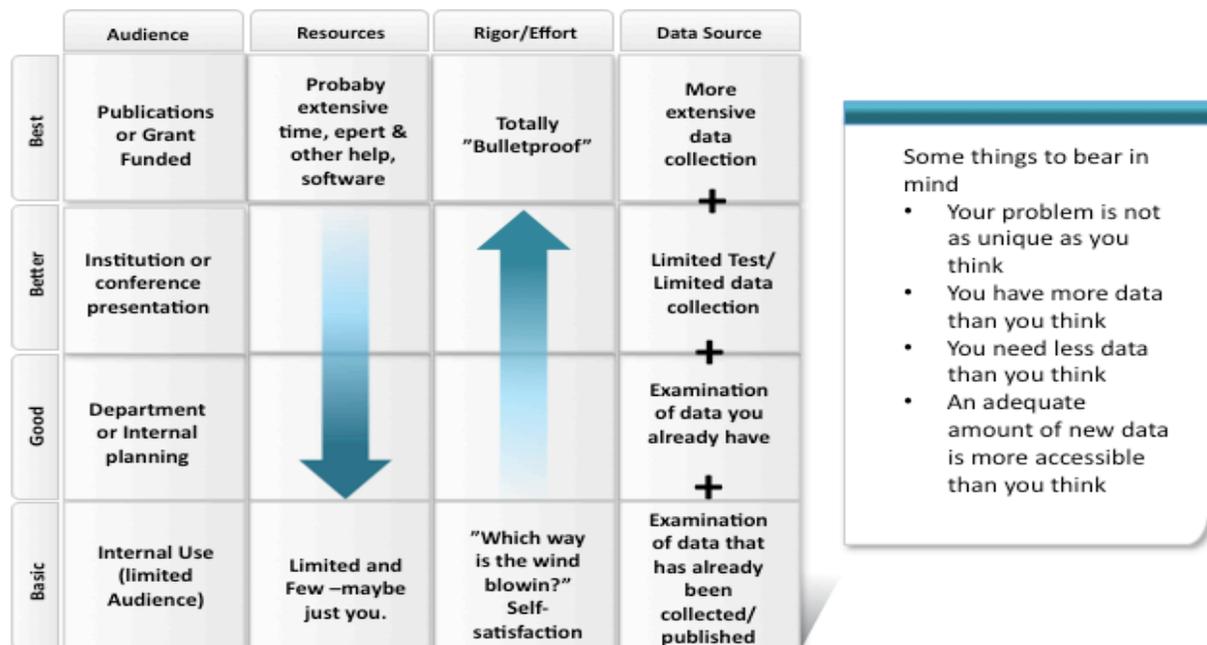


Figure 1: Understanding the Level of a Project (Morgan & Morrill. June 2011, Educause Presentation. *Planning evaluation in all shapes and sizes*)

- 2. Where are places in an evaluation project to economize?** It is important to remember the double-edged nature of utilizing students in running evaluation projects. They can certainly save money, but often that is at the expense of time. If costs are a concern, I encourage more efficiency with through structural changes wherever feasible. These could include scheduling interviews at the same place and time, even using conferences to conduct focus groups or interview and using web-surveys (as opposed to paper or phone surveys).

3. How much of an evaluation can a project do on its own? First, don't be fooled into thinking that internal evaluation is "cheap." Even if it doesn't a project extra money, it takes time, and we all know time =money. Second, note that the ATE program solicitation states that "The funds to support an evaluator independent of the project or center must be requested, and the requested funds must match the scope of the proposed evaluative activities." However, projects can capture much of the accountability-type information (e.g., how many, how often, who) on their own with good tracking systems in place (these can be developed with assistance from an external consultant, if necessary). The external consultant's role can then focus on the "so what" type questions regarding impact and effectiveness.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Hubbard, D. W. (2007). *How to Measure Anything: Finding the Value of Intangibles in Business*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

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