

EVALUATIVE PRACTICE

Insights from Session 4, Breakout Group 4 of the TCLP 2021 May Virtual Workshop, *Transformational Change and Climate Finance: Moving from Emerging Concepts to Advanced Practices*

Facilitated by **Colleen McGinn**, ISET International

Featuring **Tom Mitchell**, Climate KIC, and **Scott Chaplowe, John Colvin, and Zenda Ofir**, EvalTransform

On May 25-26, 2021, hundreds of people from 57 countries came together in a virtual workshop organized by [Climate Investment Funds'](#) (CIF) [Transformational Change Learning Partnership](#) (TCLP). Workshop participants engaged in multiple forums to tackle questions related to how practitioners can catalyze and contribute to the transformational change that is imperative to achieving an inclusive, climate neutral, resilient, and sustainable world. During the fourth and final session of the workshop, participants selected one of five breakout groups to dive deeper into a particular area of work and what it will take to advance transformational practice and impact: 1) Long-term Planning and Programmatic Approach; 2) Systems and Actor Mapping; 3) Integrating Transformation in the Project Cycle; 4) Evaluative Practice; and 5) Building Capacity for Transformation. This document summarizes key insights, resources, and opportunities to advance transformational change from concept to practice using Evaluative Practice identified in the group's discussion.

Key Insights on Evaluative Practice Towards Transformational Change

Scott Chaplowe presented four pitfalls of evaluation practice which confines transformational thinking in evaluation research. Zenda Ofir discussed how to evaluate complex systems; how to use evaluation to advance systems change and transformations; and how to deal with power dynamics and different societal values. John Colvin focused on how to understand and analyze impact within the context of complex transformations, interactive feedback loops, unintended consequences, and intersections. Tom Mitchell reviewed how to catalyze transformative change, and how evaluators can contribute to this aim. Key insights from the session include:

1. Evaluation research must directly link to decision-making and advance a global evidence base on systems change.

- Accountability is important and standardized indicators have their place, but ultimately evaluation practice should enable transformational change by identifying the right opportunities for catalytic investments.

- 2. It is high time to re-imagine evaluation research. It should be bold and purposeful and tackle the ‘big questions’ facing the climate practice community.**
 - Evaluation research must also be *resourced* to tackle big questions and empowered to embrace diverse research methodologies which are fit-for-purpose. This implies more acceptance for nuanced qualitative research, as well as ‘big data’ and other sophisticated statistical methodologies.
 - Evaluation business-as-usual is too often an exercise in confirming that targets are being met, which is a lost opportunity for analysis and action.
 - Diversifying the toolkit of evaluation methods is key to equipping evaluators to explore the most critical questions surrounding climate change and position them to drive innovation and advance systems change.
- 3. Evaluations should better span and bridge boundaries between the policy, praxis, and research communities.**
 - More diverse sets of actors should engage in evaluations. Policymakers and program managers too often see evaluators as a threat rather than a partner to co-create narratives to inform effective action on the ground.
 - Evaluators are uniquely positioned to span the boundaries between program operations and ‘pure’ research; the evaluation community can be more conscious of this niche and find opportunities to convene diverse stakeholders.
- 4. Evaluation research can be reframed to serve a broad and diverse global audience and embraced as critical learning practice to advance transformational change.**
 - This implies going beyond satisfying a single donor and/or the performance of incremental interventions and measuring only whether intended targets have been met.
 - Broader questions of environmental sustainability and social justice should be included in evaluations, and unintended consequences and signals of transformational change should be explored.
 - Evaluations should include one or more product(s) to share findings with external audiences at local, national, and international levels.
- 5. Climate change is a *new* crisis, and as such an evidence base to inform policy and praxis is only emerging. Evaluation research must be harnessed to identify what works – and why.**
 - A transformational lens is critical because incremental interventions will not be sufficient to tackle this unprecedented global threat. Evaluations can advance systems change by identifying openings, opportunities, and trends which enable transformation.

Opportunities to Advance Practices Towards Transformational Change

There are opportunities to develop resources, conduct experimentation, and catalyze learning that support transformational change through climate action, including:

- Consider ways evaluation can be used as a space to build practical capacities that bridge the gap between Systems Practice, Research, and Transformative Design. Evaluators may be able to adjust their methods to harness research and advance transformational change.
 - Create an interdisciplinary “mentorship” model that brings diverse stakeholders together to understand evaluation from a broader transformational lens.

- Explore ways to better integrate evaluation practice across the project management cycle to provide evidence for ongoing decision making around program design and course-correction. Monitoring and evaluation can bridge transformational practice theory and operations, grounding both in real-world evidence and analysis.
- Build intentional partnerships with systems design thinkers and the research community to help develop the datasets and approaches needed to evaluate systems change.
- Find opportunities to incorporate quantitative data as well as qualitative data into transformational change thinking and embrace multiple ways of knowledge and understanding.
- Use evaluation research to find intervention points within a complex system and explore opportunities to maximize impact towards transformation and foster system-level changes.
 - Conduct interviews within the evaluation research community to understand their needs and challenges in system-level transformation.
- Foster coordination with groups, such as the newly formed International Evaluation Academy, which have the potential to promote transformational change thinking.

Evaluative Practice Resources

- Blue Marble Evaluation [Principles](#).

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More Information

The insights and opportunities captured in this document reflect ongoing efforts by the TCLP to use research, analysis, expert opinion, and collaborative discussion to advance transformational change when designing, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and learning from climate investments. For more information, please visit the [TCLP website](#).

