Realist Evaluation for Complex Programs in M&E Training Course

Professional Development Training Course Outline

Category	Monitoring and Evaluation	**Duration**	5 Days
Base Fee	$1,500 USD	**Delivery Mode**	Online / On-site Hybrid

Course Introduction

In today’s dynamic development and public sector landscape, understanding what works, for whom, and under what conditions is critical for successful program implementation. Realist Evaluation offers a powerful approach for evaluating complex programs by focusing on the interplay between context, mechanisms, and outcomes (CMO). Unlike traditional evaluation methods, this approach unpacks the causal pathways that drive program success, providing actionable insights for policymakers, program managers, and monitoring & evaluation (M&E) professionals. Participants will gain expertise in designing evaluations that are evidence-based, context-sensitive, and results-oriented, enabling organizations to optimize impact, reduce inefficiencies, and foster continuous learning.

Realist Evaluation for Complex Programs in M&E Training Course equips M&E practitioners with practical skills, analytical frameworks, and methodological rigor to conduct realist evaluations in complex program environments. Through a combination of case studies, interactive workshops, and applied exercises, participants will learn to formulate realist research questions, identify mechanisms of change, and interpret nuanced program outcomes. By the end of this course, learners will be able to design evaluations that not only measure results but also explain the underlying processes driving success or failure, making it an essential tool for evidence-based decision-making and adaptive program management in complex systems.

Programme Curriculum

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Course Objectives

1. Understand the foundational principles of Realist Evaluation in M&E.
2. Distinguish between traditional and realist approaches to complex program evaluation.
3. Develop skills in context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) configuration analysis.
4. Formulate realist evaluation research questions tailored to complex programs.
5. Apply theory-driven evaluation frameworks to real-world case studies.
6. Analyze causal mechanisms influencing program outcomes.
7. Integrate mixed-methods approaches in realist evaluations.
8. Identify and manage program contextual factors affecting outcomes.
9. Interpret evaluation findings to inform adaptive program management.
10. Communicate evidence-based insights to stakeholders effectively.
11. Implement ethical and inclusive evaluation practices.
12. Foster learning and knowledge translation within organizations.
13. Enhance capacity for impact-oriented decision-making in complex systems.

Target Audience

1. M&E specialists and program evaluators
2. Development practitioners and policy analysts
3. Program managers and coordinators of complex initiatives
4. Researchers and academics in public sector development
5. Data analysts and evidence-based decision-makers
6. Nonprofit and NGO staff involved in program evaluation
7. Government officials responsible for program oversight
8. Consultants supporting evaluation and learning systems

Course Modules

Module 1: Introduction to Realist Evaluation

- Principles of realist philosophy and theory-driven evaluation

- Differences between traditional and realist approaches
- Role of context, mechanism, and outcome in complex programs
- Importance of understanding causal pathways
- Case study: Realist evaluation of a health intervention program

Module 2: Formulating Realist Evaluation Questions

- Identifying key research questions in complex settings
- Linking questions to program theory and expected outcomes
- Ensuring questions are actionable and evidence-oriented
- Prioritizing questions based on stakeholder needs
- Case study: Education program targeting multiple community contexts

Module 3: Understanding Context and Mechanisms

- Mapping program context factors and environmental influences
- Identifying mechanisms driving behavioral and organizational change
- Tools for contextual analysis in complex programs
- Linking mechanisms to observed outcomes
- Case study: Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) initiative

Module 4: Data Collection Methods in Realist Evaluation

- Designing mixed-methods approaches (qualitative and quantitative)
- Selecting appropriate data sources and instruments
- Ensuring validity and reliability in complex program data
- Ethical considerations in data collection
- Case study: Community health program evaluation

Module 5: Analyzing Complex Program Outcomes

- Techniques for interpreting CMO configurations
- Using data to uncover causal mechanisms
- Identifying patterns and deviations in program outcomes
- Integrating findings across multiple sources
- Case study: Social protection program for vulnerable populations

Module 6: Applying Realist Evaluation Frameworks

- Using program theories and logic models in evaluation
- Linking context, mechanism, and outcome for actionable insights
- Tools for scenario analysis and adaptive evaluation
- Stakeholder engagement in theory refinement
- Case study: Multi-sectoral youth empowerment program

Module 7: Communicating Findings and Recommendations

- Crafting clear and actionable evaluation reports
- Tailoring findings to diverse stakeholders
- Using storytelling to explain complex evaluation results
- Strategies for knowledge translation and uptake
- Case study: Policy implementation evaluation in education

Module 8: Building Learning and Adaptive Systems

- Integrating realist evaluation into organizational learning
- Developing feedback loops for continuous improvement
- Using evaluation insights for adaptive management
- Scaling successful interventions based on evidence
- Case study: Health system strengthening program

Training Methodology

This course employs a participatory and hands-on approach to ensure practical learning, including:

- Interactive lectures and presentations.
- Group discussions and brainstorming sessions.
- Hands-on exercises using real-world datasets.
- Role-playing and scenario-based simulations.
- Analysis of case studies to bridge theory and practice.
- Peer-to-peer learning and networking.
- Expert-led Q&A sessions.
- Continuous feedback and personalized guidance.

Register as a group from 3 participants for a Discount

Send us an email: info@fineskilltrainingcenter.org or call +254769199797

Certification

Upon successful completion of this training, participants will be issued with a globally- recognized certificate.

Tailor-Made Course

We also offer tailor-made courses based on your needs.

Key Notes

a. The participant must be conversant with English.

b. Upon completion of training the participant will be issued with an Authorized Training Certificate

c. Course duration is flexible and the contents can be modified to fit any number of days.

d. The course fee includes facilitation training materials, 2 coffee breaks, buffet lunch and A Certificate upon successful completion of Training.

e. One-year post-training support Consultation and Coaching provided after the course.

f. Payment should be done at least a week before commence of the training, to Fineskill Training Center account, as indicated in the invoice so as to enable us prepare better for you.

Upcoming Scheduled Sessions

Start Date	End Date	Location	Price
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Online	$1,000
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$1,500
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$3,000
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$3,000
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$6,000
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$4,500
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$6,000
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$6,000

Ready to enroll or request a customized program? Book online or contact us:

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