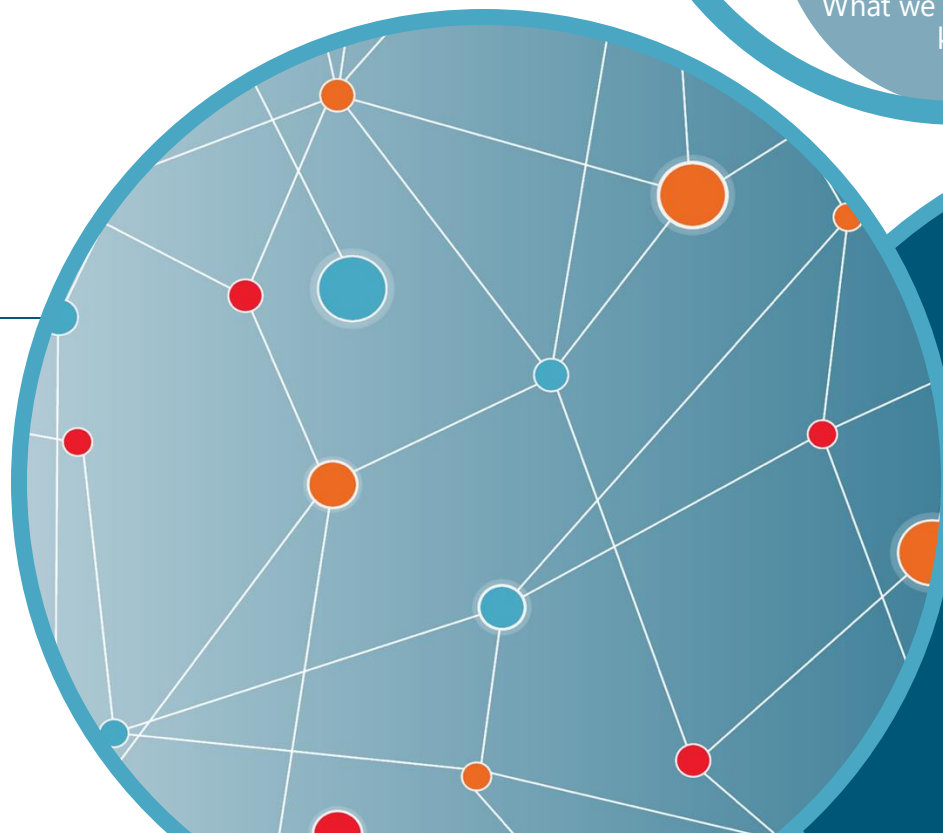
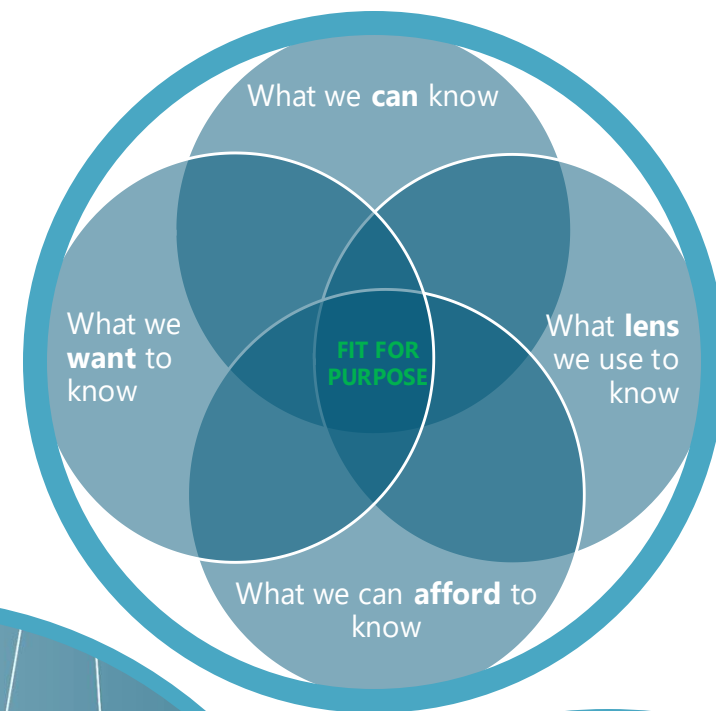




Fit for purpose evaluation: a pragmatic summary for 'reading the room'

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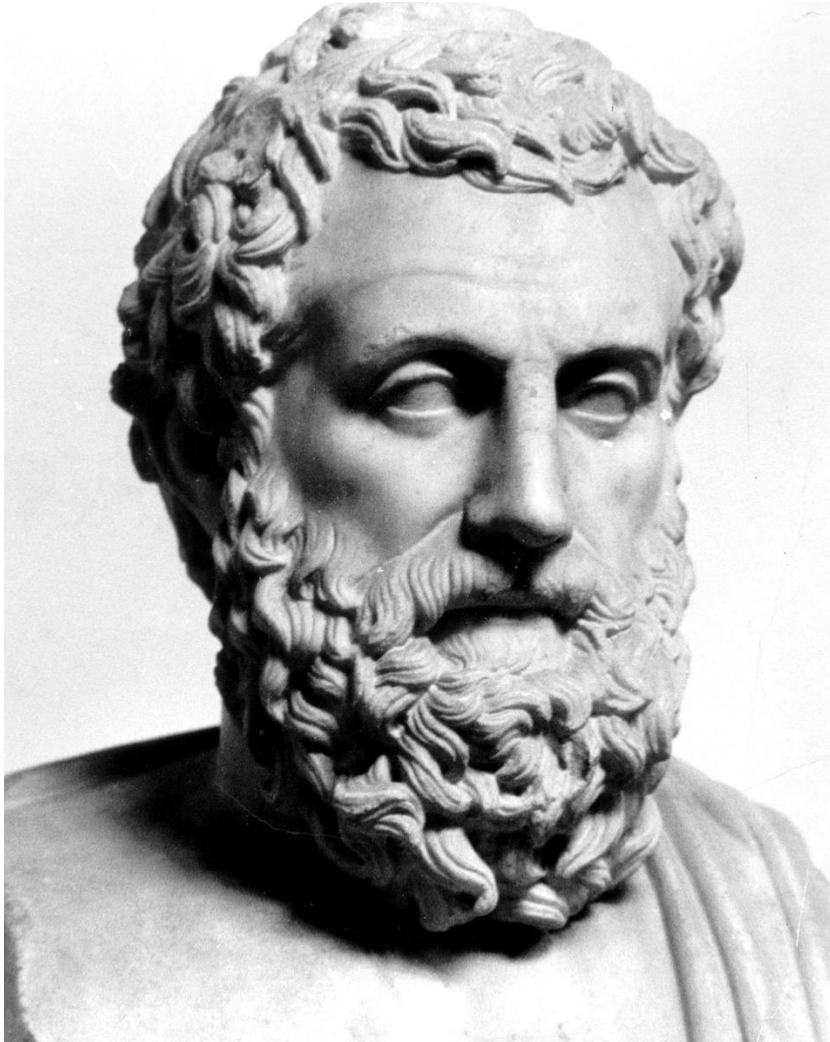


Why evaluation?

*"Life can only be understood backwards;
but it must be lived forwards."* Søren
Kierkegaard



Why fit for purpose evaluation?



"It is the mark of an educated mind to rest satisfied with the degree of precision which the nature of the subject admits and not to seek exactness where only an approximation is possible." Aristotle

Planning a fit for purpose evaluation: finding the sweet spot

1. Philosophically - what we **can** know depends on how formed and stable the evaluand is. From endlessly dynamic to fully formed.

Developmental: when its dynamic explore and manage risk (perhaps forever!)

Formative: when it is forming build knowledge and understanding

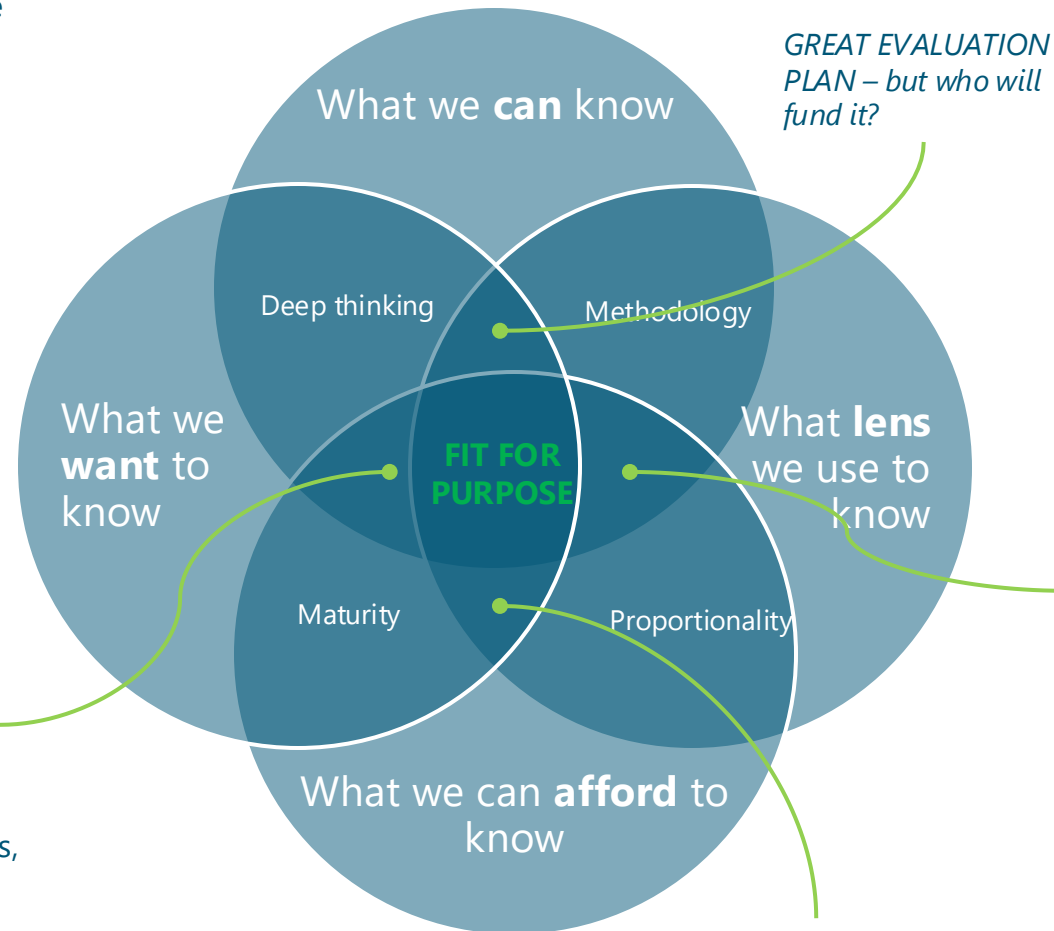
Summative: when it is mature, judge overall merit and relative worth

Get it wrong and we are trying to nail jelly to a wall

GREAT IDEA, better hire an evaluation expert!

2. What we **want** to know should be based on the decisions we need to make or the overall purpose and key evaluation questions, for example

- Should we be doing this?
- How can we improve this?
- Does it work, for whom under what circumstances and to what extent?



GREAT EVALUATION PLAN – but who will fund it?

3. The **lens** we look through is our 'paradigm' and affect our 'biases', 'what we see in an evaluation

- Accountability
- Realist
- Empirical – post-positivist
- Constructivist
- Pragmatist
- Systems

Also ask, what role am I playing, what are my values what perspective do I hold, what is my bias?

YES, but does anyone care?

4. Practically - what we can only **afford** to know as far as our resources allow us

- Money
- Time
- Skills

Evaluation should not cost more than the value of information obtained.

1. What we can know, a pipeline?



Developmental: Innovation and risk management

- SEED STAGE. From a bright idea to a reasonable proposition for action and working out the kinks. A focus on innovation and managing the risk of failure. This is usually the right place to start with a new policy or program.



Formative: Knowledge and understanding

- EARLY STAGE. Drawing on the full range of applied social scientific approaches and methods to identify causal mechanisms and contextual conditions affecting outcomes. Often mixed methods.



Summative: Evidence-based funding

- MATURE STAGE. Making hardheaded decisions about what to fund based on evidence of effects in a range of contexts (e.g. RCTs) and at what cost (e.g. CBAs) relative to other ways to spend money.

2. What we want to know, reading the room

In the ideal world an evaluand will progress from developmental, to formative and then summative evaluation, but things are rarely ideal!

- If the Minister says, 'I just want to know what works' then identify the stage of development and proceed.
- If the Minister says, 'make this idea work' then go developmental.
- If the Minister says, 'how can we improve this?' go formative.
- If the Minister says 'I need evidence to know if we should fund this' then go to summative.

