



Best Practice:

Lifting the Quality of Research and Evaluation

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About SPEaR

SPEaR is the inter-agency Committee responsible for co-ordination, quality and communications (in relation to social policy research and evaluation) to improve capability, capacity and outcomes

Read more at www.spear.govt.nz



SPEaR's strategic direction

Key directions for improving coordination, capacity and capability include:

- Improving information sharing
- **Best practice for quality research & evaluation**
- Collaborative demonstration projects



Best practice for quality research & evaluation

1. Conceptual Framework
2. Systems approach
3. Programme of work for a quality framework for social research and evaluation
4. Open process involving key people and groupings



The diagram on the next slide was originally developed as a way of conceptualising debate about competing paradigms, articulations and methodologies, in relation to research.

Such debates have sometimes been expressed as the 'positivist' paradigm versus the 'interpretative' paradigm (e.g. Neuman 1997 in Davidson & Tolich, 1999, page 26) and various methodologies have been assigned to either paradigm.

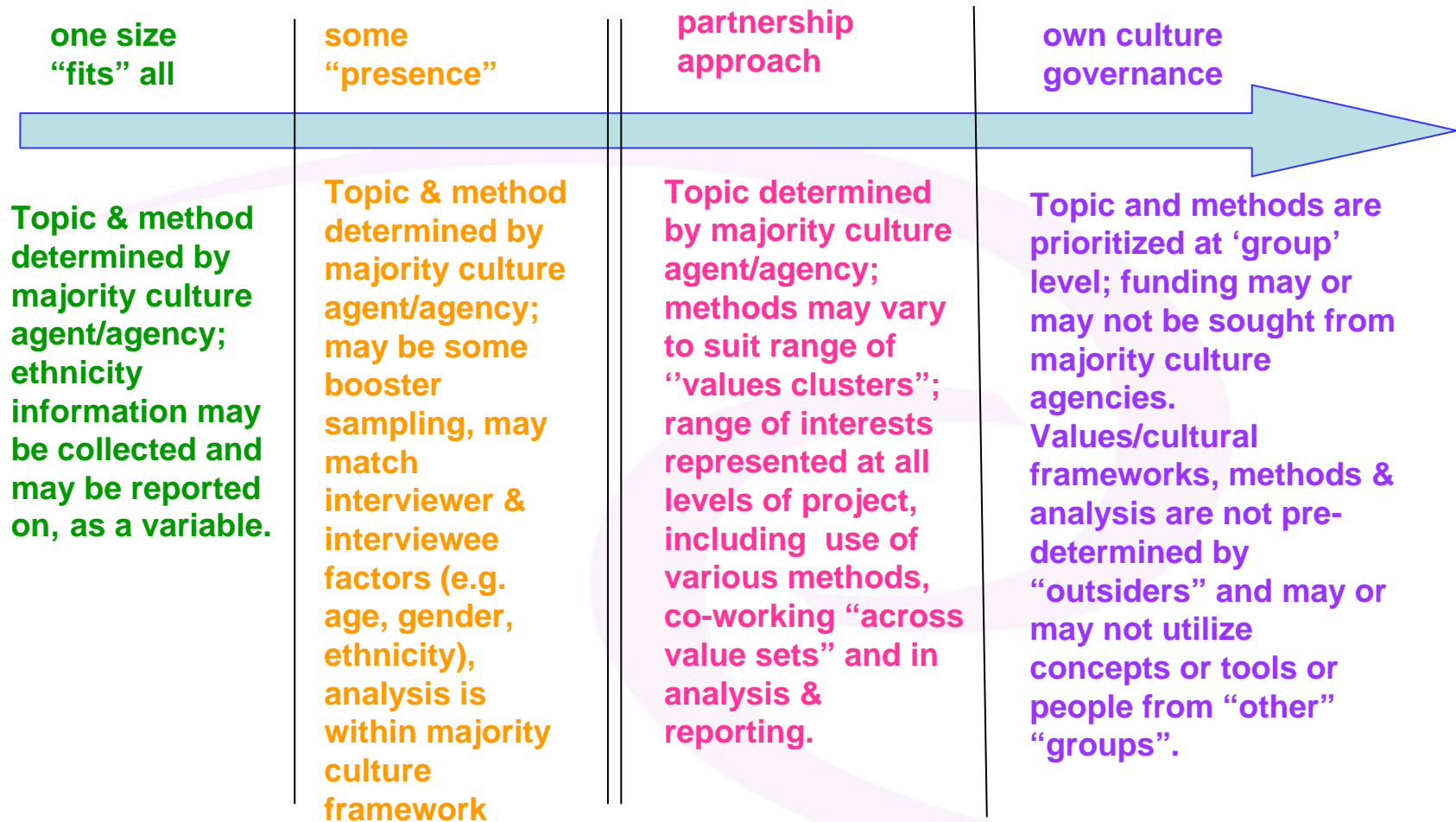
The diagram attempts to display a continuum of conceptual approaches and includes examples of techniques which can be observed in association with each approach.

The approaches and techniques range can be applied to various 'values clusters' and groupings but is most commonly seen as 'ethnic/cultural'.

see next slide



Conceptual Framework





The next diagram shows the stages a research or evaluation project usually goes through in a government agency **with our overlay of Best Practice.**

We hold this **an ideal to lift agency practice toward** through the piloting, implementation, training, monitoring, refining, assisting, stages of the SPEaR Best Practice Project as the guidelines are implemented in real world situations.





Four areas of work **begun 2002**

- R & E Involving Maori
- R & E Involving Pasifika
- Contracting
- Applying Ethics

Material gathered, discussions held, draft approach evolves 2002-3 in an iterative process.



April 2004

1. Series of workshops planned to enable wider involvement in the process
2. Range of people invited to participate in a series of workshops (academic, private sector, public sector, specialists and generalists)
3. Those unable to attend workshop dates invited to participate at other stages of the process



May 2004

1. Source material, discussions and analysis brought together as a series of papers

Background Paper

- OHP's
 - Starter Papers for each work area
2. Circulated to workshop participants
 3. June - Put up on www.spear.govt.nz and comments invited



Key Points from June Workshops

Overall

1. Endorsement of process/appreciation
2. Willingness for ongoing engagement
3. Importance of enduring relationships stressed
4. Vision of evidence informed policy/quality R & E
5. Lifting the game needed
6. Capacity and capability building required
7. Communication improvement and sharing of knowledge sought
8. Breadth/teeth/traction sought through SPEaR Departments and then spread through the sector



R & E involving Maori

1. Balanced approach involving conceptual/principles (vision/pragmatism) supported
2. Should provide a framework for case studies and lessons
3. Some further development and resourcing required



R & E involving Pacific Peoples:

1. Advisory function/body needed to get critical mass, quality enhancement, obtain knowledge build and minimise the one-off myriad of ad hoc 'advisory' gatherings now
2. Body would be accessible by a range of agencies for a range of projects
3. Body could be hosted by SPEaR and resourced partly by SPEaR (and perhaps partly by agencies)
4. Ideas to be discussed further at Pasifika Fono
24/11/04



Contracting

1. Clear need to improve practice
2. Range of viewpoints - need for understanding between commissioners and contractors
3. R & E/Legal/Public Finance Act & Audit need closer weaving
4. Competition v collaboration – dialogue needed
5. Modular contracting practice across agencies not considered to be effective in the long term – leads to duplication
6. Need to focus on meta learning and net accumulation of knowledge



Applying Ethics

1. Debate about whether ethics committee needed or better to incorporate practice mechanisms into existing project practice
2. Some further distribution/consultation (including range of current practice) needed
3. Support use of ASSR/AES applied material
4. Experts keen for further engagement



SPEaR Best Practice Working Party set up August 2004

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Aim

The SPEaR Best Practice Guidelines Working Party has been formed to provide oversight, focus and support for the programme as it progresses through to the “Quality Framework” release and to oversee uptake.

Cont'd.



Key Objectives

- **Act as a conduit** for oversight and reporting to the SPEaR Committee, including financial oversight for expenditure in the area;
- **Provide support and advice** through the development process;
- **Assist with content development** (department testing, case study provision, and draft editing);
- **Assist with achieving utilisation** of the guidelines;
- **Monitor and evaluate uptake and progress** towards improving consistency and quality of social research and evaluation across Government.



Where are things at now?

- Resources identified (\$, within SPEaR, additional)
- Draft statement of high level principles (to form basis for iterative testing)
- ‘What the principles mean in practice’ being drafted
- Potential case illustration collection begun
- Possible ‘pilot’ agency sites explored
- Preliminary discussions - What would effective operationalisation look like?
- Project Plan to SPEaR for approval December 2004

2005 – intensive activity



Draft list of guiding principles (as at November 19th 2004)

- **RESPECT**
- **INTEGRITY**
- **RESPONSIVENESS**
- **COMPETENCY**
- **RECIPROCITY**

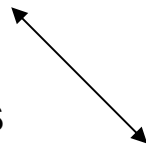


Proposed Structure for SPEaR Best Practice Guidelines

Three linked parts

Principles

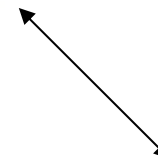
**Generic
descriptors**



Principles

Applied Descriptors

What each principle means in relation to the 4 work areas (means further work areas can be added later on)



Principles

**Applied
Examples**

Case Studies
•Agency tested
•Projects utilised



How Can You Participate?

- **Engage** - visit www.spear.govt.nz - in the Best Practice section we will continue to lodge material and seek feedback;
- **Send in examples** of contract clauses you have negotiated e.g. Intellectual Property, Publication Arrangements, data sharing/ownership (we will respect commercial sensitivity but if you are concerned contact me direct raewyn.good002@msd.govt.nz Any material cited would be by mutual agreement);

Cont'd.



- **Send in** potential material for case study inclusion – we may also approach you - any citing/usage would be mutually agreed;
- **Monitor** the Funding and Work section of www.spear.govt.nz for contracting opportunities (they are likely to be smaller than those on the GETS site and you do not have to register to view SPEaR material);
- **Participate.**



'Something useful'
NOT
'something on the shelf'
is
THE GOAL.

The Social Policy,
Research & Evaluation
Conference 2004
What Works?
25-26 November, Wellington Convention Centre



Thank you

SPEAR

Social Policy Evaluation & Research Committee

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