This chapter presents a description of the CIPP Evaluation Model, a comprehensive framework for conducting and reporting evaluations. The model is intended for the use of service providers, such as policy boards, program and project staffs, directors of a variety of services, accreditation officials, school district superintendents, school principals, teachers, college and university administrators, physicians, military leaders, and evaluation specialists. The model is configured for use in internal evaluations conducted by organizations, self-evaluations conducted by individual service providers, and contracted external evaluations.

Corresponding to the letters in the acronym CIPP, the model’s core concepts are context, input, process, and product evaluation. Context evaluations assess needs, problems, and opportunities as bases for defining goals and priorities and judging the significance of outcomes. Input evaluations assess alternative approaches to meeting needs as a means of planning programs and allocating resources. Process evaluations assess the implementation of plans to guide activities and later to help explain outcomes. Product evaluations identify intended and unintended outcomes both to help keep the process on track and determine effectiveness. By employing these four interrelated types of evaluation, policymakers, program and project staffs, and individual service providers can conduct or contract for evaluations to help initiate, develop, and install sound programs, projects, or other services; to strengthen existing programs or services; to meet the accountability requirements of oversight groups, sponsors, and constituents; to disseminate effective practices; and to contribute to knowledge in the area of service. Evaluations following the CIPP Model
also help external groups—funding organizations, persons receiving or considering using the sponsored services, policy groups and program specialists outside the program being evaluated, and other audiences—to understand and assess the merit and worth of the program, project, or other service.

Two key definitions undergird this chapter: evaluation and standards. An evaluation is a systematic investigation of the merit and/or worth of a program, project, service, or other object of interest. Operationally, evaluation is the process of delineating, obtaining, reporting, and applying descriptive and judgmental information about some object’s merit and worth in order to guide decision making, support accountability, disseminate effective practices, and increase understanding of the involved phenomena. Professional standards for evaluations are principles commonly agreed to by specialists in the conduct and use of evaluations for the measure of an evaluation’s value or quality.

The remainder of the chapter presents the CIPP Model’s philosophical stance; identifies objects of CIPP evaluations; delineates context, input, process, and product evaluations; presents techniques that are particularly useful in each of these types of evaluation; identifies values and criteria appropriate to democratically-oriented CIPP evaluations; provides structures for designing and contracting for CIPP evaluations; and presents illustrations of applying the model.

THE CODE OF ETHICS UNDERGIRDING THE CIPP MODEL

The CIPP Model has a strong orientation to service and the principles of a free society. It calls for evaluators and clients to identify and involve rightful beneficiaries, clarify their needs for services, obtain information of use in designing responsive programs and other services, assess and help guide effective implementation of services, and ultimately assess the services’ merit and worth. The thrust of CIPP evaluations is to provide sound information that will help service providers regularly assess and improve services and make effective and efficient use of resources, time, and technology in order to appropriately and equitably serve the well-being of rightful beneficiaries.

CIPP evaluations must be grounded in the democratic principles of equity and fairness. A key concept used in the model is that of stakeholders. They are those persons who are intended to use the findings, persons who may otherwise be affected by the evaluation, and those expected to contribute to the evaluation. Consistent with the Joint Committee’s (1994) Program Evaluation Standards and writings of House and Howe (chapter 22, this volume), Bhola (chapter 20, this volume), Alkin (1979), Cuba and Lincoln (1989), and Patton (chapter 23, this volume), evaluators should search out all relevant stakeholder groups and engage them in hermeneutic and consensus-building processes to help define evaluation questions, clarify criteria of merit and worth, contribute needed information, and help interpret findings. Such rich, sustained, consequential involvement positions stakeholders to understand, value, and act upon evaluation findings and conclusions.

Since information empowers whoever holds the information, the CIPP Model emphasizes the importance of even-handedness in involving and informing all of a