



FLUX

Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

FLUX CORE BUSINESS FOUNDATION

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Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Flux’s Core Business Statements..... | 1 |
| Flux’s Business Area | 2 |
| Flux’s Ideal Partner | 3 |
| Flux’s Ethical Principles | 4 |

This document is the result of an exercise to (a) provide greater clarity on the guiding principles of Flux’s work internally, and (b) make these principles more transparent to external audiences.

For readers on computers:

Internal links throughout the document appear highlighted in **BLUE TEXT**.

External hyperlinks are formatted in **bold blue text with underline**.



Flux's Core Business Statements

Flux Mission

Make data meaningful. We connect those spearheading social change with the social sciences approaches, methods, and services required to inform decisionmaking about operations, ongoing program evolution, and impact.

Flux Vision

That data, evidence, and reflection inspire learning, resilience, and dignity in places of need.

Flux Values

What ties Flux's services together, no matter the context, is a healthy mix of curiosity, creativity, and pluralism:

Curiosity:

1. *the desire to learn or know about anything; inquisitiveness.*
2. *carefulness; fastidiousness.*

Creativity:

1. *the ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like, and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, interpretations, etc.; originality, progressiveness, or imagination*

Pluralism:

1. *a condition in which minority groups participate fully in society, yet maintain their cultural differences.*
2. *a doctrine that a society benefits from such a condition.*

In academic terms, Flux mixes empirical and pragmatic schools:

Empiricism

All of Flux's services are underpinned by "the practice of relying on observation"¹ or "the evidence of the senses"¹ to make sense of reality. We rely on an iterative process of developing theories and seeking to judge how well they agree with available data/predict future outcomes (although not necessarily in that order).

Pragmatism

In a broader sense, Flux applies pragmatic thinking in all business. The social contexts in which Flux operates only rarely permit observation (i.e. measurement, data collection) of the subjects of concern, especially observation of the more formal types usually associated with empiricism. Flux not only accommodates practical constraints, for example time and money, but also deeply respects the influence of subtler social boundaries, such as taboo, race, and gender.



Flux's Business Area

Flux's core business area is research, monitoring, and evaluation. We gather systematic evidence on social programs and present findings in meaningful ways to guide decisionmaking.

Diverse definitions of the terms 'monitoring and evaluation' abound; Flux is most directly guided by the American Evaluation Association definition:

"Evaluation is a systematic process to determine merit, worth, value or significance... Programs and projects of all kinds aspire to make the world a better place. Program evaluation answers questions like: To what extent does the program achieve its goals? How can it be improved? Should it continue? Are the results worth what the program costs? Program evaluators gather and analyze data about what programs are doing and accomplishing to answer these kinds of questions."¹

In line with the generality of this definition, Flux's services take on a large range of forms, manifesting across a range of traditional professional fields throughout private business, academia, the public sector, and non-profits (e.g. "knowledge management" or "social impact measurement").

Guided by our values (see [FLUX VALUES](#) on p. 1), an important aspect of Flux's work is the separation of the content of findings from the how they were derived and presented. Flux is responsible for executing a high-quality, transparent process to develop the results, as well as for clearly presenting these findings to key audiences. Flux is *not* responsible for ensuring that stakeholders *agree* with the results themselves (we are not a marketing firm). This principle of separation helps ensure the results accurately represent the real-world.

¹ <http://www.eval.org/p/bl/et/blogid=2&blogaid=4>



Flux's Ideal Partner

Flux serves a broad range of social changemakers of diverse sizes both locally and internationally. Flux believes in working “with” not “for” or “on” our partners. Flux believes that the benefits of the partnership our will be greatest when our partners embody the following characteristics:

Driven by Social Change

Focuses on improvement for the marginalized and disadvantaged. Always returns to the basic premise of improving the lives of the marginalized and disadvantaged.

Hungry to Learn

Demonstrates a deep, energetic drive to learn. And sustains this drive to continue learning.

Eager to Discover Patterns

Abstracts situations, recognizes patterns, and discerns underlying structures. Loves discovering the story behind things.

Pragmatic

Works constantly to apply learning in real-world situations. Allows, even relishes, how the constraints of the real world shape both learning and application of knowledge into a fluid, evolutionary process.

Proactive

Thinks ahead and takes the initiative in both action and communication. Values efficiency but appreciates that efficiency is a means to an end, not an end in and of itself.

Straightforward and Constructive

Values others' understanding as fundamental to success. Takes strong positions without righteousness or absolutism, maintaining a willingness to change.



Flux's Ethical Principles

Golden Rule

At the highest level, Flux is unified by a commitment to the Golden Rule. In its simplest form: **Treat others as you would like to be treated.** This base value, also known more technically as reciprocal altruism, implies that all people should be treated with respect, dignity, and empathy (see: Cultural Sensitivity). It is important to note that this value must be proactively upheld, not simply passively observed. Flux upholds this value through promoting the wellbeing of others and preventing harm to others. Flux strives to be conscientious and thoughtful in the work that we do, and the interactions that we have. We aspire to demonstrate the highest quality in both our processes and products in hopes that we may receive the same from those with whom we interact.

Examples:

Flux is in the middle of a high-workload period. All staff are extremely busy attending to current clients. During this moment, a student interested in learning more about Flux's work and potentially eventually becoming a member of the team makes personal contact through email. Even though making time to communicate with this student is not strictly in the short-term interest of the company, Flux is responsible for responding. Even if the team is unable to meet until a period with lighter workload, Flux should at least briefly explain the situation student to demonstrate respect for the effort of reaching out, independent of the status or potential benefit of the communicator.

A conflict with the client over payment for work performed has been [fairly] resolved in Flux's favor. Months later, Flux sees a request for proposals from the same client. Flux should not simply write off the possibility of working with this client again, but instead consider and weigh the possibilities. Just as Flux aims for continuous improvement, empathetic thinking requires that Flux regularly refresh thinking about others.

Accountability

At its base, the value of accountability is the answer to the question **'Who does Flux serve?'** Flux serves a broad range of stakeholders and stakeholder groups. The table below outlines some of the primary groups regularly considered:

| Stakeholder(s) | Examples |
|--|--|
| Self (own conscience) | The person making the decision, doing the action |
| Vulnerable stakeholders involved in evaluation | Young students, dairy farmers in mining-intensive region of Peru, homeless recycling workers |



| Stakeholder(s) | Examples |
|--|--|
| Vulnerable stakeholders not involved with evaluation. | Parents of young students from modest backgrounds, the families of the dairy farmers in Peru, recycling workers not in the cooperative |
| Team – partners, employees, subcontractors Client | Flux employees, subcontractors |
| Client | Client team overseeing evaluation, organizational leadership, organization as a whole |
| Less vulnerable stakeholders involved with the evaluation | Client partners institutions, funders of a project not directly involved with the evaluation |
| Less vulnerable stakeholders not involved with the evaluation | Institutions funding projects in the same thematic/geographic area |
| Other audiences likely to be concerned with evaluation results | Academics in same/similar research area(s) |
| Wider community of evaluation practice | Other evaluators, evaluation professional community |

When conducting our work, Flux considers the framework of the relevant stakeholders and their interests. Applying this accountability framework in a carefully considered, contextualized manner is paramount. For continuous projects, Flux incorporates a review of this framework into regular strategic planning sessions. For bounded, project-based work, Flux makes an active effort to understand power relationships in context. By considering all stakeholder groups of interest, Flux strives to optimize the work that we do, while considering the confidentiality and privacy of the groups to whom we are accountable.

Example:

Flux is working on a contract with a nonprofit charter school, where the principal hopes to show the positive results of the new curriculum that the school just introduced. While the principal had some initial suggestions for the way that Flux ought to undertake the evaluation, Flux believes that following the suggestions will create unreliable results that will not accurately depict the results from the new curriculum. When Flux suggested a more rigorous approach to the method, the principal noted that they were not looking for thorough results, rather they wanted the results to show the positive outcomes of their curriculum.



In this case, it is important for Flux to consider the relevant stakeholders. While the principal is seeking results that may not accurately present the results of the evaluation, Flux must also consider another major stakeholder group in the evaluation - the students. While it is important for Flux to maintain a positive relationship with the principal, Flux has a duty to all of the relevant stakeholder groups that cannot be ignored. As a monitoring and evaluation company, Flux is committed to designing an evaluation that considers all stakeholders.

Transparency

Flux is committed to transparency both internally and externally, where we believe in sharing not only the results of our work, but also the processes used to produce our results. We strive to convey information to all stakeholders in formats that are clear and easy to understand. Flux stresses the importance of taking initiative to actively pursue transparency throughout all stages of our projects. In addition to this, Flux stresses the importance of holistic transparency and believes in sharing not only the results, but also the processes used to produce those results. Due to Flux's standard of methodological rigor, this includes sharing data, methods, and the reasoning behind both.

Example:

After working through the previous ethical issue with the charter school, Flux has managed to form a positive relationship with the school, and has begun to work with them as a program evaluator. Through surveys, interviews, and the use of records, Flux has put together many useful materials for the school and potential funders. Flux has released the results of the evaluation of the curriculum to a number of stakeholders. However, a couple are distrustful of the positive numbers that resulted from the evaluation. Luckily, Flux exercises transparency, and could present the data, methods, and reasoning that formed the results, thereby clearing up any confusion and proving space for constructive critique.

Sustainability

Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.

Flux is committed to helping grow sustainability and self sufficiency in our clients in conjunction with our services and products, and strives to incorporate empowerment into our daily work, through the provision of capacity building and mentorship. This belief includes both financial sustainability and sustainability of impact. We envisage mentorship as a pathway to sustainability by providing opportunities for capacity building and self sufficiency. Flux empowers those with whom we work by developing the tools, capabilities, and opportunities to adopt and use evaluative thinking and skills.

Example:

Flux is working with an international development nonprofit in Latin America to generally address their data and evaluation needs. The organization's tracking data is disorganized often staff have trouble finding data when the need it. Flux establishes new technical systems and procedures for the organization, but Flux and the organization recognize that without continued guidance, these systems



may eventually stray again towards disorganization and inaccessibility. Flux therefore sees a duty to provide ongoing capacity building and mentorship. Through training courses and irregular hourly help, Flux works with the organization on a variety of levels to gradually transition responsibility for maintenance and upkeep, promoting deep-rooted, irreversible change.

[Cultural] Sensitivity

Flux believes that it is essential to consider the role of culture in our work, and to remain aware of the uniqueness of the stakeholders that we encounter. Flux strives to take conscious account to the ways in which others' values and perceptions vary from our own. We also recognize how culture interacts with our own preexisting values and biases. Flux aspires to provide our services in a culturally competent, empathetic manner.

Example:

Flux has just begun working with an organization conducting a study of bike traffic in Seattle, Washington. During the first meeting with the associate director of the organization, they make it clear that they already have a firm idea of how the evaluation ought to be run, and they want to control the design from the start. However, this differs from how Flux believes that an evaluation should be operated, we find ourselves butting heads with the associate director from the start. Flux has two choices: they can discontinue their work with the organization, or they can attempt to work with the the differing values and interests of the organization. Flux elects the latter, and chooses to understand more about the culture of the organization, the priorities of the stakeholders, and what the ultimate visions of the program and organization are. We choose to hear out the associate director, understand how the organization's values and biases differ from our own, and design the study collaboratively. By being sensitive to the organization and the evaluand, Flux aims to maximize the benefits of the evaluation.