

## Step 2: Identify Stakeholder Needs

**Stakeholders** are the individuals and organizations that will be affected by the results of the evaluation and may include those involved in providing services, those directly served by the program, and the intended users of the evaluation. The person, group, or organization requesting and/or paying for the study, the sponsor, is always a stakeholder as well as the service recipient population (students/clients).

**Stakeholder needs** generally reflect the central questions the stakeholders have about the program. Determining stakeholder needs helps to focus the evaluation process so that the results are of the greatest utility.

Stakeholder needs affect eight features of the study:

- Purpose
- Central questions
- Uses
- Scope
- Timeline
- Methods for gathering information
- Data analysis
- Reporting of results

Use Worksheet E below to identify stakeholders and their needs, and to make it easier to articulate the central questions of your study. **Central questions** establish the boundaries of your study by stating what specific aspects of the program will be examined. They are also important in identifying the purpose and uses of your study.

**Follow these steps when using the worksheet:**

1. Identify any questions that more than one stakeholder is likely to have. Use the fourth column to mark these with an "X" because they are probably more important.
2. Rank the questions by their importance. Assign the same rank to similar questions. You may also want to ask key stakeholders to rank the questions.
3. Choose the top 1-3 questions to be the focus of your evaluation; these are the central questions.

