REGENERATIVE EVALUATION

INFLUENCES, PATHWAYS & PRACTICES

By The Regenerative Evaluation Community of Practice

Hosted by Unity Effect

Regenerative Evaluation: Evaluation in Service of Life

To foster change today means navigating a gap between two realities: the reality of *reporting* (demanding accountability and proof of impact) and the reality of the *planet* (calling for regeneration, complexity, and interconnectedness). For too long, evaluation has forced a choice, functioning as an extractive exercise—mining data to count the "fruits" of a project while ignoring the health of the "soil" that sustains them.

Regenerative Evaluation bridges this gap. Moving beyond extractive measurement, it is an evolving practice that embraces rigor while actively nourishing the systems it assesses. This document outlines its core components:

- **The 9 Guiding Principles:** The internal values and mindsets that orient our judgment and align our work with living systems.
- **The 7 Core Practices:** A practical, three-phased cycle of specific methods and habits that translate these principles into tangible evidence and action.
- **The 3 Essential Evaluation Strands:** The evaluation lineages (systemic, power-conscious, and ecological) that this practice weaves together.
- **Applications and Future Pathways:** Entry points for bringing this work to life across projects, organizational vitality, funding, and policy.

The 9 Guiding Principles

These principles serve as internal navigators to guide decision-making and practice:

1. **Align with the cyclical rhythms of life:** Honors periods of "wintering" (rest), growth and "composting" (stopping what no longer serves).
2. **Cultivate Self-Awareness & Reflexivity:** Recognizes that evaluators are not neutral observers but active participants.
3. **Time as Teacher: Learn from the past to shape life-affirming futures:** Honors the deep past (including colonial histories) while nurturing life-affirming futures.
4. **Shift Power and Center Marginalised Voices - Human and More-than-Human:** Transitions ownership of evaluation to the community.
5. **Honor Place, Story and Lived Experience:** Rejects "copy-paste" solutions in favor of context-specific, lived experience.
6. **Nurture System Vitality:** Focuses on the health of relationships and feedback loops within a system.
7. **Unearth and Amplify Innate Potential:** Rejects a "deficit mindset" to identify innate strengths and assets.
8. **Embrace Iterative Learning and Emergence**: Shifting from "predict and control" to "sense and respond".
9. **Center Love as a Force for Transformation:** Views evaluation as a fierce commitment to the flourishing of the system

The Seven Core Practices

Regenerative Evaluation is a living cycle of inquiry. Its seven practices are interconnected, forming a rhythm of ongoing learning and adaptation.

To link natural growth cycles with the evaluation lifecycle, we organize these practices into three phases:

Phase 1: Grounding & Design (The Soil) - Evaluation Scoping & Setup: Before asking "Does it work?", we first seek to understand "Who are we?" and "What is the context?" This phase moves beyond isolated planning to integrate deep listening and intentional design, ensuring the evaluation is rooted in the reality of the ecosystem.
   1. Empathic Understanding (Deep Listening & Situational Awareness)
   2. Mapping Ecosystem Contribution (Past & Future)
   3. Intentional Regenerative Design

Phase 2: Tending & Inquiry (The Growth) - Data Collection & Monitoring: We "tend" to the system by gathering insights through a blend of coaching, participatory methods, and rigorous quantitative data collection. This approach maintains high standards of evidence while simultaneously building the capacity and agency of those we work with.
   4. Evaluative Coaching (Embedding Learning & Reflection)
   5. Meaningful Data Collection (Engaging Approaches)

Phase 3: Harvesting & Replanting (The Seeds) - Analysis, Reporting & Strategic Action: We engage in collective sense-making to digest the learning from our diverse data sources. Crucially, the final step is Replanting—turning stories, statistics, and insights into seeds for the next cycle of strategy and action.
   6. Joint Sense-Making (Beyond Just Data Analysis)
   7. Strategic Storytelling (Transforming Reporting into Future Action)

The 3 Essential Evaluation Strands

Regenerative Evaluation weaves together three major evaluation lineages to address the modern polycrisis:

- **Systemic & Complexity-Aware:** Moves beyond linear "cause-and-effect" logic (did A cause B?) to honor emergence, feedback loops, and interdependencies. It asks how an intervention influences the wider ecosystem and adapts to changing contexts over time.
- **Power-Conscious & Justice-Oriented:** Acknowledges that measurement is never neutral. This strand centers equity, elevates lived experience, and actively works to shift decision-making power and data ownership back to the communities being evaluated.
- **Planetary & Ecological:** Expands the boundary of "stakeholders" to include the more-than-human world. It places biological health, ecological carrying capacity, and planetary regeneration at the center of how we define long-term success.
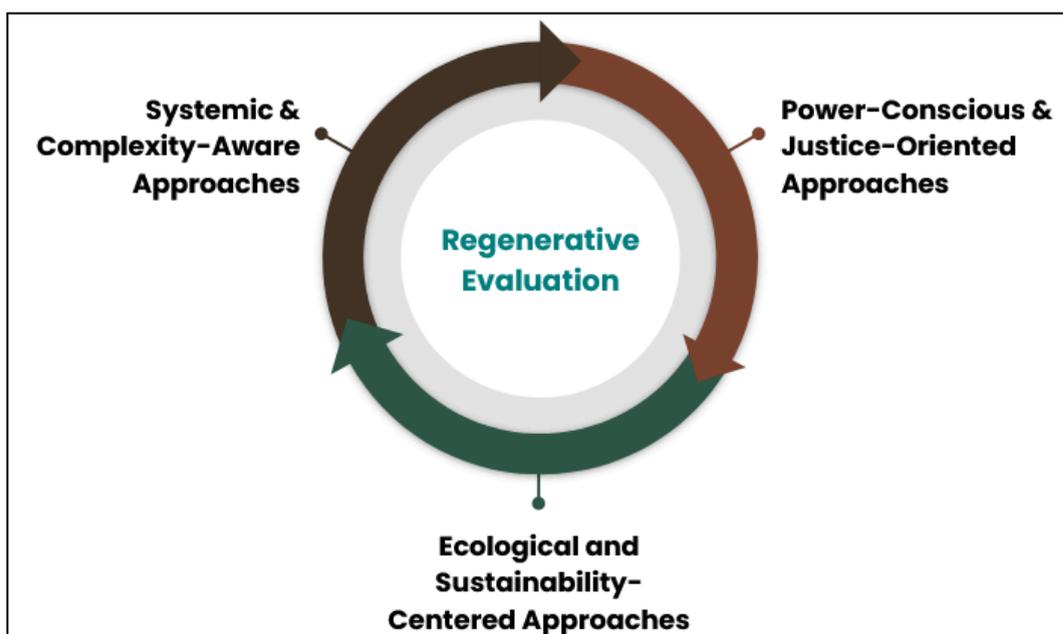
Applications and Future Pathways

Regenerative Evaluation can be applied to **program evaluation**, **funding strategies**, **policy effectiveness**, and **future foresight**. As an evolving, open-source field, our community is actively building the future of this practice through three strategic pathways:

1. **Deepening the Foundations:** Strengthening the academic grounding of the practice.
2. **Growing the Community:** Cultivating peer learning spaces, accessible training programs, and open-source resources to empower a global network of practitioners.
3. **Scaling Real-World Applications:** Partnering directly with funders, policymakers, and institutions to embed these practices across sectors.