



Frame the boundaries for an evaluation

Set the parameters of the evaluation – its purposes, key evaluation questions and the criteria and standards to be used.

1. Identify primary intended users

Who are the primary intended users of this evaluation?

This task does not have specific options but does have resources to help guide you.

2. Decide purposes

What are the primary purposes and intended uses of the evaluation?

Using findings:

Contribute to broader evidence base: inform future policy and practice by others outside the organization.

Inform decision making aimed at improvement (formative): changing or confirming policies and practices.

Inform decision making aimed at selection, continuation or termination (summative): identifying best value for money.

Lobby and advocate: justify expenditure and demonstrate achievements.

Using process:

Build trust and legitimacy across stakeholders: develop better understandings of each other and demonstrate that expectations are being met.

Ensure accountability: holding someone to account to someone for something.

Ensure diverse perspectives are included, especially those with little voice: make explicit the experiences and values of key stakeholders, especially intended beneficiaries.

3. Specify the key evaluation questions

What are the high level questions the evaluation will seek to answer? How can these be developed?

This task does not have specific options but does have resources to help guide you. In addition, be clear about the different types of questions you want the evaluation to answer:

Descriptive question - what has happened? what is the situation?

For example - Where has the program been delivered? What changes have occurred for participants?

Causal question – what caused or contributed to the results?

For example - What were the outcomes and impacts of the program? What other factors contributed to achieving these outcomes and impacts?

Synthesis question – is this good? In what ways could it be better? Is it the best option?

For example -Did service delivery comply with agreed standards? Was the program cost-effective? What were its strengths and weaknesses?

Action question – what action should be taken?

For example -Should the program continue? What changes should be made to the program? Should it be scaled up?

4. Determine what success looks like

What should be the criteria and standards for judging performance? Whose criteria and standards matter? What process should be used to develop agreement about these?

Formal statements of values:

DAC Criteria: setting out high level evaluation criteria for evaluations which must be operationalized for each evaluation (OECD's Development Assistance Committee).

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): a set of time bound and quantified goals and targets developed to help track progress in eradicating poverty

Standards, evaluative criteria and benchmarks: developing explicit standards, evaluative criteria or benchmarks or using existing relevant standards, criteria or benchmarks to define values.

Stated goals and objectives (including legislative review and policy statements): stating the program's objectives and goals so they can be used to assess program success.

Articulate and document tacit values:

Hierarchical Card Sorting (HCS): a participatory card sorting option designed to provide insight into how people categorize and rank different phenomena.

Open space technology: facilitating a group of 5 - 500 people in which a central purpose, issue, or task is addressed without a formal initial agenda.

Photovoice: using cameras to allow participants (often intended beneficiaries) to take and share photos in order to describe how they relate to important issues for them.

Approaches

Critical System Heuristics: an approach used to surface, elaborate, and critically consider boundary judgments, that is, the ways in which people/groups decide what is relevant to the system of interest (any situation of concern).

Rich Pictures: exploring, acknowledging and defining a situation through diagrams in order to create a preliminary mental model.

Stories of change: showing what is valued through the use of specific narratives of events.

Values Clarification Interviews: interviewing key informants and intended beneficiaries to identify what they value.

Values clarification public opinion questionnaires: seeking feedback from feedback from large numbers of people about their priorities through the use of questionnaires.

Negotiate between different values:

Concept Mapping: negotiating values in order to frame the evaluation.

Delphi Study: generating a consensus without face to face contact by soliciting opinions from individuals in an iterative process of answering questions.

Dotmocracy: recording participants opinions by using sticky dots to either record agreement or disagreement with written statements.

Open Space Technology: facilitating a group of 5 - 500 people in which a central purpose, issue, or task is addressed without a formal initial agenda.

Public Consultations: conducting public meetings to provide an opportunity for the community to raise issues of concern and respond to options.

Find options (methods), resources and more information on these tasks and approaches online at http://betterevaluation.org/plan/engage_frame