

## Develop initial description

It is helpful to develop an initial description of the project, program or policy as part of beginning an evaluation.

Checking this with different stakeholders can be a helpful way of beginning to identify where there are disagreements or gaps in what is known about it.

An overview of what's being evaluated can include information on:

- The rationale: the issue being addressed, what is being done, who is intended to benefit
- The scale of the intervention, budget and resources allocated and stage of implementation
- The roles of partner organizations and other stakeholders involved in implementation
- The implications of contextual factors - geographic, social, political, economic and institutional circumstances can create opportunities or challenges
- Significant changes that have occurred over time - because of changes in contextual factors or lessons learnt

## Methods

- [Existing project description](#)

Existing project descriptions about what is being evaluated can sometimes be accessed and used by evaluators.

- [Peak experience description](#)

This method provides a succinct and coherent description of a program, project or policy when it is operating at its best.

- [Thumbnail description](#)

A 'thumbnail' is a brief description (short like a thumb nail).

## Approaches

- [Appreciative inquiry](#)

Appreciative Inquiry is an approach to organisational change which focuses on strengths rather than on weaknesses - quite different to many approaches to evaluation which focus on deficits and problems.