

## Determine what 'success' looks like

Evaluation is essentially about values, asking questions such as : What is good, better, best? Have things improved or got worse? How can they be improved?

Therefore, it is important for evaluations to be systematic and transparent in the values that are used to decide criteria and standards.

### **Criteria**

Criteria refer to the aspects of an intervention that are important to consider when deciding whether or not, and in what ways, it has been a success or a failure, or when producing an overall judgement of performance. There are different types of criteria:

**Positive outcomes and impacts:** for example, should childcare be judged in terms of its success in supporting early childhood development or in supporting parents to engage in education or work? If it is both, how should they be weighted?

**Negative outcomes and impacts:** for example, an infrastructure development might produce negative unintended effects (e.g. soil erosion caused by a new road) as well as positive intended effects)

**Distribution of costs and benefits:** for example, is it important for everyone to receive some benefit or the same benefit or for the intervention to be targeted so that the most disadvantaged receive more benefit?

**Resources and timing:** for example, is there a need for results to be achieved within a certain timeframe?

**Processes:** for example, use of recyclable materials; providing access to groups with restricted mobility

### **Standards**

Standards refer to the levels of performance required for each of the criteria. For example, if a project aims to reduce maternal mortality, what level of performance is needed for it to be considered successful? Any reduction? A reduction of at least xx%? A reduction of at least xx in absolute terms? A reduction to a rate of x.x that matches other similar regions, or matches official targets?

Criteria and standards need to be agreed on in order to identify the data that need to be gathered for an evaluation.

In addition, these data need to be combined to form an overall judgement of success or failure, or to rank alternatives against each other. For example, if a road project achieves its economic objectives but produces environmental damage, should it be considered a success overall? How much damage, and at whose cost, would be enough to outweigh the positive impacts? These issues are addressed under the task [Synthesise data from a single evaluation](#).

## **Methods**

### **Formal statements of values**

- Some options are used to identify possible criteria and standards that could be used in an evaluation, drawing on formal and informal sources, and some options are used to negotiate which should be used and how they should be weighed.

- [Standards, evaluative criteria and benchmarks](#)

Standards, evaluative criteria, or benchmarks refer to the criteria by which an evaluand will be judged during an evaluation.

- [Stated goals and objectives](#)

Evaluations can use the program's stated objectives and goals to assess program success or failure.

## Articulate and document tacit values

- [Hierarchical card sorting](#)

Hierarchical card sorting (HCS) is a participatory card sorting method designed to provide insight into how people categorise and rank different phenomena.

- [Open space](#)

Open Space Technology (OST) is a group facilitation approach for small and large gatherings in which a central purpose, issue, or task is addressed, but which begins with a purposeful lack of any formal initial agenda.

- [Photovoice](#)

Photovoice is a participatory photography method that seeks to empower marginalised people to share their experiences through digital storytelling.

- [Rich pictures](#)

A rich picture is a way to explore, acknowledge and define a situation and express it through diagrams to create a preliminary mental model and can help to open discussion and come to a broad, shared understanding of a situation.

- [Stories of change](#)

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

Structured with a beginning, middle and end, they focus on the change that has taken place due to the program.

- [Values clarification interviews](#)

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

- [Values clarification public opinion questionnaires](#)

Seeking feedback from large numbers of people about their priorities through the use of questionnaires.

## Negotiate between different values

- [Concept mapping](#)

A concept map shows how different ideas relate to each other - sometimes this is called a mind map or a cluster map.

- [Delphi study](#)

The Delphi technique is a quantitative option to generate group consensus through an iterative process of answering questions.

- [Dotmocracy](#)

Dotmocracy is an established facilitation method for collecting and recognizing levels of agreement on written statements among a large number of people.

- [Open space](#)

Open Space Technology (OST) is a group facilitation approach for small and large gatherings in which a central purpose, issue, or task is addressed, but which begins with a purposeful lack of any formal initial agenda.

- [Public consultations](#)

Public consultations are usually conducted through public meetings to provide an opportunity for the community to raise issues of concern and respond to options.

## Approaches

- [Critical systems heuristics](#)

This chapter provides a detailed introduction to critical systems heuristics and the use of its central tool boundary critique.

- [Participatory evaluation](#)

Participatory evaluation is an approach that involves the stakeholders of a programme or policy in the evaluation process.