

Engage team

Evaluations can be conducted by in-house staff (internal) or a third party (external) or a mix of both.

Advertising the Terms of Reference (ToR) / Request for Proposal (RFP) is the first step in engaging external evaluators but other important issues need to be addressed to ensure an effective and transparent selection process and to orient the selected evaluator(s).

Once the decision to use external evaluator(s) has been made, sufficient time should be allowed to engage them. Good evaluation consultants are typically busy, so provide enough lead time for them to fit potential new work into their schedules.

Products

The following items are potential outputs from this step. Where possible, it might be useful to research other deliverables that have also been shown to be effective.

- Call for Expression of Interest (IoE)
- Evaluation proposal
- Evaluator(s) selection criteria for shortlisting
- Evaluator(s) final selection questions
- Reference check questions
- Consultant contract
- Briefing book or project documentation center

IDRC-specific information

IDRC staff should consult internal guidance from Procurement about identifying and selecting external consultants. Decisions start with whether to use a competitive process or not. This page http://intranet.idrc.ca/en/ev-94737-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html houses decision-making flow charts to determine what kind of process you should follow, as well as detailed guidance and forms. Involve Procurement early on in making these decisions and ask about the specific forms you will need to fill out if you will be using a competitive process. A lot of what you have already developed for the Terms of Reference will transfer smoothly into the required RFP form. You can contact Procurement colleagues via: purchase_achats@idrc.ca

- [Selecting an Evaluation Consultant or Team. Evaluation Guideline, February 2012.](#)

Advertise the evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR) / Request for Proposal (RFP)

There are different approaches to advertising the evaluation ToR / RFP. These are typically based on the organization's specific procurement procedures and often linked to the cost of the work.

Sources for prospective bidders include: other agencies that have used external evaluators, local universities, research institutes, consulting firms, professional evaluation associations.

For an **open call** (i.e., one that seeks competitive bids), advertising can be done in local newspapers, through online professional networks or listserves, agency newsletters etc. Build in as much time as possible between the posting and the deadline for submissions to maximize the response.

If there is sufficient time, a two-step process may be considered. Firstly, an **Expression of Interest (EoI)** is solicited which often only includes requests to submit a letter of intent and CVs. Subsequently, a **full proposal** is requested from those selected on the basis of the EoI. The first step helps to narrow down the pool of prospective candidates for the second step to those most likely to match the requirements and, thus, reduces the amount of work in reviewing full proposals. However, many organizations use EoIs in different ways and for different reasons.

For a **closed call**, advertising is targeted at a limited number of consultants or organizations / institutions pre-selected in a certain manner, often for their particular expertise needed for the evaluation but also as a means to simplify the bidding process when a need to contract out services arises.

Prospective bidders are encouraged to ask questions about the ToR / RFP to clarify requirements. There are usually specific rules about how this process is managed including time frames for questions and whether and how answers are shared.

Products

The following item is a potential output from this sub-step. Where possible, it might be useful to research other deliverables that have also been shown to be effective.

- Call for Expression of Interest (EoI)
- Terms of Reference (ToR) or Request for Proposal (RFP)

IDRC-specific information

A publicly announced request for proposals (RFP) for evaluation contracts are hosted on a central [Government of Canada website](#). In addition, announcements are posted on listserves and websites such as:

- [Monitoring and Evaluation News](#)
- [Peregrine discussion groups](#)
- sectoral listserves (e.g., agricultural research listserve, peace research networks); the [outcome mapping learning community](#); regional evaluation listserves (e.g., [African Evaluation Association](#), the [Community of Evaluators South Asia](#), [ReLAC](#))

Commissioners may also want to talk to other (similar) organizations to get recommendations for evaluators to contact or talk to their grantees for suggestions.

Select an evaluator / evaluation team

A transparent selection process uses explicit criteria and involves more than one person (often a panel or committee) to discuss and agree on the selection.

The selection criteria and process as well as who will sign-off should, ideally, be discussed and agreed early on in the evaluation process (see [Step 1](#) for further information).

Shortlisting potential candidates

Applications need to be reviewed and a shortlist of potential candidates determined. Typically, applications are ranked in terms of the degree to which they match the selection criteria. Ranking is facilitated by carefully considering the relative importance of the selection criteria for the work at hand. In the first instance, use the 'essential' and 'desired' qualities but further distinctions may also be needed (such as specific content expertise or previous work in a particular context or with certain stakeholders) (see [list of evaluator qualities](#)).

Final selection of the evaluator(s)

The shortlisted candidates are then further queried through a follow up interview (face-to-face or by phone/internet) or other communication means. Decide who will be on the selection panel and what questions will be asked. For example, the following questions may be helpful:

- Knowledge and experience – Does the bidder have the market, industry and/or professional experience to meet your agency's needs?
- Team composition – Are the team members listed in the proposal the people who will actually do the work? Is the team known to your agency?
- Business values and policies – Does the bidder reflect your agency's business values and expectations of quality?
- Understanding the job – How well does the bidder understand the size and scope of the job? Are they up to the challenge?
- Innovative and creative thinking – Will the bidder be able to respond to emerging issues throughout the evaluation?

[The above list of questions were adapted from: [Choosing the right consultant](#). In: Policy Makers Toolkit. Steps in Managing and Evaluation Project. Premier & Cabinet, NSW Government, Australia.]

The selection of a team leader is particularly crucial to the success of the evaluation. A good team leader is results-oriented and focused on management objectives. She/he must have demonstrated ability to manage and synthesize the input and participation of the various team members as well as the range of stakeholders involved. Good communication skills –both verbal and written– and good facilitation and negotiation skills are essential.

Determining potential conflict of interest or safeguarding an appropriate level of 'independence'

Another important issue in the final selection is to determine if the individual or their organization has any potential conflict of interest which may compromise the credibility of the evaluation. Criteria for excluding certain individuals/organizations from undertaking the evaluation could include:

- not having been involved in the design, implementation or oversight of the activities;
- not having received funding from the organization / program in the recent past (such as at least not in the last two years)'
- not having a stake in what the evaluation uncovers.

Conducting reference checks

As the final step before hiring an evaluator, look at their past work, check references, and make sure you feel comfortable that they are credible, competent, and capable of leading a useful evaluation process. Some key issues that can be discussed in the reference check are:

- Timeliness – Did they meet the milestones and deliver the product on time?
- Responsiveness – Were they flexible enough to deal with unexpected challenges or delays? Did they respond to the project / program team in an appropriate manner?
- Relevance – Did they follow the terms of reference?
- Professionalism – What was their work style, communication ability, or degree of cultural sensitivity?
- Evaluator good practice – Did they engage openly with the project / program team? Did they proactively explain their decisions based on good practice in evaluation?
- Evidence-based conclusions – Were the report's conclusions evidence-based or mainly conjecture?

[The above list of questions was adapted from: Willard A. [Managing and implementing an evaluation. Guidelines and Tools for Evaluation Managers](#). USA: American Red Cross, Catholic Relief Services, USAID, 2008.]

Resources

- [Checklist for selecting an evaluator \(pdf download\)](#)

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook (page 63) , 2004.

- [Choosing the right consultant](#)

Premier & Cabinet, NSW Government, Australia.

Prepare the contract

Your organization probably has standard requirements and templates for consulting contracts.

Generally speaking, the contract needs to clarify:

- Who will perform the evaluation tasks, the level of contact and expectations about communication between the evaluator(s) and the funder and/or the project/program (such as formal meetings, written progress updates etc.), specific milestones and/or deliverables, and time frames;
- Agreed total cost (with or without specific costing categories such as professional fees, travel, materials) and payment schedules;
- Who owns the evaluation information and to whom it can be released (including the data, the reports and any other types of publications including in professional journals); and,
- Any legal issues such as amendments to the contract, resolving disputes or conditions for terminating the contract.

The ToR can be used as the basis for a contract with the external evaluator(s)

Any negotiations between the consultant and the commissioning organization are best left to the contracting specialist and the project manager. It is useful if the evaluation manager knows if there were particularly contentious issues, but she/he should not be involved in negotiations as this may complicate her/his relationship with the consultant during the evaluation process.

Products

The following item is a potential output from this sub-step. Where possible, it might be useful to research other deliverables that have also been shown to be effective.

- Consultant contract

IDRC-specific information

The evaluation commissioner should work closely with GAD or the Procurement Department to issue the consultant contract.

Orient the evaluator / evaluation team

The evaluator(s) need a clear understanding of what needs to be evaluated.

They need to obtain as much background information on the project / program as possible, its implementers, the intended beneficiaries, and its specific context.

One of the responsibilities of the evaluation manager is ensure the evaluator(s) have access to all relevant project / program documentation and available data sources (e.g., project monitoring indicators). If the documentation and data sources are well-organized, the evaluator(s) can start their work more quickly rather than having to spend time identifying and compiling materials. If these materials are not easily accessible, the evaluation manager can work with the project / program manager to streamline the documentation process and engage relevant staff in bringing the documentation together.

The ToR / RFP, typically, provides the reporting requirements (see [Step 3](#)) for the evaluation but it is useful to discuss these in more detail during the orientation of the evaluator(s) to ensure they are fully understood.

Products

The following item is a potential output from this sub-step. Where possible, it might be useful to research other deliverables that have also been shown to be effective.

- Project / program documentation: core documentation briefing book, bibliography and/or documentation center including hard and/or electronic copies