

Evaluation work plan

Oversee or engage in the development of a work plan that sets out the specific activities to implement the evaluation.

This should include identification of the reporting requirements and a dissemination plan.

The work plan can refer to existing documentation, so there is no need to start from scratch or duplicate effort. For large, multi-stakeholder evaluations, it may be helpful to spell out the roles and responsibilities of different actors and make the work plan a more formal document.

What should the evaluation work plan contain?

The evaluation work plan is a written document that specifies the evaluation design and details the practices and procedures to use in conducting the evaluation including:

- The evaluation framework –the project / program objectives and theory of change or logic model, the evaluation questions, the evaluation context (such as aspects of the organization, staff, participants etc. which may affect the evaluation) and time frame;
- The evaluation design, methods and processes –types of information needed, data collection and analysis methods, compliance with ethical standards (including informed consent, confidentiality, etc.), quality assurance processes (such as training of data collectors, data cleaning etc.), compliance with reporting requirements, dissemination of evaluation findings and supporting use (in case of external evaluators, the latter tasks may be / may not be included in their responsibilities);
- Who will do which tasks and when in the evaluation implementation;
- Contingencies –how challenges in the evaluation implementation will be identified and addressed.

Estimates of time needed for pre-evaluation as well as evaluation activities should be realistic, but need to incorporate some flexibility (or at least some openness to re-negotiation) to be able to deal with unanticipated challenges in the implementation of the evaluation.

How should the evaluation work plan be developed?

If the evaluation is conducted by internal evaluators, it is their responsibility to develop the plan –with or without the help of an outside consultant– and in consultation with the program manager and/or other program staff.

If the evaluation is conducted by external evaluators, the development of the evaluation plan is usually the first deliverable in their contract.

The evaluation plan should be developed well in advance of the start of the evaluation (at least 2-3 months) to allow for: review by relevant stakeholders; making necessary changes; obtaining ethical approval, where required (such as through an Institutional Review Board, IRB); and, pilot testing data collection instruments, as needed.

Review of the evaluation plan may include determining whether it:

- is consistent with the available evaluation resources and agreed evaluation objectives;
- focuses on the most important types of information to know (i.e., need to know rather than nice to know);
- does not place undue burden on project / program staff or participants;
- is ethical and culturally appropriate.

Reviewers may include: project / program staff, internal or external evaluation experts, advisory board members, the organization's administrators, project / program participants and relevant community members.

What does evaluation logistics planning entail?

If logistics are poorly thought out or under-funded, even the best evaluation team will not be successful. Hence, an evaluation logistics plan should be detailed and well-coordinated to support the different evaluation activities.

Critical logistical planning may include: negotiation of site visit dates, objectives and on the ground requirements (such as staff availability, access to documents/data etc.); necessary notification of officials or community leaders to ensure access and cooperation/collaboration; requirements for transportation, lodging, food, office space and other facilities; requirements for translators or other specific services (such as security).

The commissioning organization may take on the logistics for the evaluation fully or partially, regardless of whether internal or external evaluators are used. In either case, a designated evaluation logistician should be identified to ensure everything runs smoothly and to problem-solve where needed.

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.

- Evaluation work plan
- Evaluation logistics plan

IDRC-specific information

Here are some examples of work plans for IDRC-commissioned evaluations.

- [Inception Report for the phase II evaluation of the Think Tank Initiative](#)
- [Inception Report for the evaluation of the Canadian International Food Security Research Fund](#)
- [Work plan and evaluation matrix for the ACACIA program external review, 2010](#)