

## Decide the timing of the evaluation

**Monitoring** (the routine tracking and reporting of priority information about an intervention) and **evaluation** (a discrete study to produce an evaluative judgement about merit, worth or significance of an intervention) are distinct but highly inter-related activities.

Generally, monitoring and evaluation findings are used at different times, with different regularity, different resource needs and for different purposes. Both monitoring and evaluation are needed for effective program management and decision making. It is insufficient to conduct monitoring without any kind of evaluative reflection, and, given the episodic nature of most evaluation studies (with notable exceptions such as developmental evaluation), they are, by themselves, inadequate to support adaptive management of an ongoing intervention. Hence, it makes sense to plan for and implement M&E activities in a manner that draws on their respective strengths.

**As part of a plan that integrates M and E, decide *when* an evaluation should begin and end.**

Once the decision to evaluate has been made, deciding the timing is largely determined by what decisions the evaluation is intended to inform and when the evaluation findings will be needed to be able to do so.

Many organizations refer to mid-term and end-of-term (or final) evaluations. These terms should **not** be literally interpreted as ‘mid-way’ and ‘at the end’ of the intervention implementation period.

A mid-term evaluation often needs to be undertaken very early on (well before the mid-point of a project) –especially with new interventions where it is important to investigate and ensure the quality of implementation.

An end-of-term evaluation might need to be undertaken well before the end if it is intended to inform a decision about whether or not to continue the funding or scale up an intervention. Or, it might need to be undertaken some time after an intervention ends in order to follow up longer-term impacts and the sustainability of results achieved during implementation.

Managers should think through the use of the evaluation findings and decide when it is most appropriate to conduct the evaluation. Mid- and end-of-term/final evaluations can be usefully defined as:

- ***mid-term evaluation*** –primarily intended to inform improvement of implementation. The aim is to maximize the potential for achieving the intended results at the end of the intervention and identifying lessons learned about implementation to inform future interventions. These evaluations can identify (early signs of) unintended, positive and negative, results.
- ***end-of-term or final evaluation*** –primarily focus on project or program results and how and why they were achieved (or not) to inform decisions such as whether to continue the intervention, to improve it, to scale it up or replicate it elsewhere. They can also be used to identify lessons learned to guide implementation and improve results in future interventions.

## Product

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.

- Evaluation timeline

## Resources

- [What is the timeline for the evaluation activities? \(Archive link\)](#)

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