

## Report & Support Use of findings

From the first step of the evaluation process, even though it may be one of the last evaluation tasks, explicitly discuss the content, sharing, and use of reports during the initial planning of the evaluation and return to the discussion thereafter. Most importantly, identify who your primary intended users are. Use of the evaluation often depends on how well the report meets the needs and learning gaps of the primary intended users.

Besides the primary intended users (identified as part of framing the evaluation), your findings can be communicated to others for different reasons. For example, lessons learned from the evaluation can be helpful to other evaluators or project staff working in the same field; or it may be worthwhile remolding some of the findings into articles or stories to attract wider attention to an organisations' work, or to spread news about a particular situation.

You will share the findings of the evaluation with the primary intended users and also other evaluation stakeholders.

Don't limit yourself to thinking of sharing evaluation findings through a report. Although a final evaluation report is important it is not the only way to distribute findings. Depending on your audience and budget, it may be important to consider different ways of delivering evaluation findings:

- Presenting findings at staff forums and subject matter conferences
- Developing a short video version of findings
- Sharing findings on the organisation intra-net
- Sharing stories, pictures and drawings from the evaluation (depending on what options you have used to gather data)
- Creating large posters or infographics of findings for display
- Producing a series of short memos

## Identify reporting requirements

Before you begin to gather and analyze your data, consider how you can ensure your collection efforts will meet the reporting needs of your primary intended users.

From the very beginning, reporting is an integral part of evaluation which allows you to:

- communicate what you do;
- monitor and track progress;
- demonstrate impact;
- document lessons learned;
- and be accountable and transparent to donors, partners and benefiting communities.

"Evaluation reports may be the only lasting record of a programme or project, including the results achieved and the lessons that were learned from its implementation" (Oxfam Evaluation Guidelines p.11).

Different groups of primary intended users will have varying needs for the evaluation report. When your evaluation plan was developed at the beginning of the process, you should have determined the different groups of primary intended users and begun to ask questions about how the report could be most useful. This information should then be reviewed periodically. Once the reporting deadline nears ensure there is clarity on each of the stakeholder groups' reporting requirements (what needs to be reported and when).

Some questions that may arise include:

- What do you need to include in different kinds of reports?
- At what point do you need to get feedback on your findings - and from whom?
- Will your findings be presented in draft form?
- Are you willing to share draft findings?
- Will you have any influence over the way the findings are re-presented?

Reporting timelines often present a major constraint on the evaluation plan. In particular, the need to report findings in time to inform funding decisions for the next phase of a program often means that reports are needed before impacts can be observed. In these situations, it will be necessary to report on interim outcomes, and to present any research evidence that shows how these are important predictors or pre-requisites to the final impacts. (See the tasks [Develop Program Theory/Logic Model](#) and [Collect and/or Retrieve Data](#) for more information on this).

Work with the intended users to determine key points in their own reporting and project cycle. For example, the evaluation may be a necessary part of their legislative requirement for an annual review. If that is the case, you need to know their time and internal pressures. Alternatively, they may be presenting at a major conference and want an update from the evaluation team.

With the primary intended users, their learning needs, and their timelines in mind, develop a communication plan to guide the evaluation reporting process. A communication plan can be as simple as a table that organizes this information. Use the communication plan to align data collection activities with reporting needs and to prioritize the time spent on reporting. (Consider the full range of reporting mediums before finalizing the plan. Not everyone will want a full technical report. For ideas on how to make your report more creative, go to the [Develop Reporting Media](#) task page.)

## Methods

- [Communication plan](#)

A communication plan outlines the strategies that will be used to communicate the results of your evaluation.

- [Reporting needs analysis](#)

Conducting a needs analysis with your client to determine their reporting requirements.

## Resources

### Guides

- [Designing and conducting health systems research projects Volume 2: Data analyses and report writing](#)

This guide provides 13 modules designed to demonstrate aspects of data analysis and report writing.

- [Evaluation strategies for communicating and reporting: guide](#)

This book from Torres, Preskill and Piontek has been designed to support evaluators to incorporate creative techniques in the design, conduct, communication and reporting of evaluation findings.

## Develop reporting media

You may develop a number of reports, in different formats, for different sets of stakeholders.

Work with your primary users and stakeholders to determine when and in what form they want to receive evaluation reports. Also determine who you will involve in viewing draft and interim reports.

Points to consider in choosing the format are:

- How does the audience prefer to receive information – text, graphics, numbers, written, visual or a mixture of all of these?
- What is the preferred length (or duration if an audio/visual presentation)?
- What access does the audience have to information technology (this may inform whether you use web-based formats)?
- What is the purpose of the report and how does this inform the choice of format? Purposes may include:
  - keeping stakeholders engaged during an evaluation
  - providing feedback to and maintaining the commitment of people collecting data during implementation
  - flagging emerging findings and implications for ongoing program development and for the evaluation
  - presenting interim recommendations
  - seeking feedback on draft reports to assist in identifying causal factors
  - informing planning, funding or policy decisions
  - broader dissemination of findings to support use

## Methods

- Traditionally, written reports have been the main form of media used for evaluation reports. However, we now know that the full technical report is not enough to meet the learning needs of our audiences. The presentation of your report should help your reader quickly and easily understand your key points.

## Written

- Increasing report readability makes it more likely that readers will be able to learn from the report.

Reporting in the order of importance allows readers to easily access those things which they are most interested in. These are generally the findings and recommendations which, therefore, should appear early in the report. Less relevant details, such as the evaluation background and methodology, belong in an appendix or can even be posted online for reference.

- [Aide memoire](#)

An aide-memoire generally refers to a document that is produced to summarise key findings and important recommendations of an evaluation.

- [Executive summaries](#)

The executive summary of an evaluation report is a shortened version of the full report – usually one to four pages – that highlights findings and recommendations and is placed at the front of the report.

- [Final reports](#)

Evaluation reports can be read by many different audiences, ranging from individuals in government departments, donor and partner staff, development professionals working with similar projects or programmes, students and community groups.

- [Interim reports](#)

Interim (or progress) reports present the interim, preliminary, or initial evaluation findings.

- [Memos and email](#)

Memos and emails can be used to help maintain ongoing communication among evaluation stakeholders through brief and specific messages about a particular issue.

- [News media communications](#)

News media communications can include communication channels such as newspapers, magazines, and radio, as well as digital formats such as online news sites, podcasts, social media, and blogs.

- [Newsletters, bulletins, blogs, briefs and brochures](#)

Short communication formats—such as bulletins, briefs, newsletters, blogs and brochures—can be used to highlight particular findings or angles on the evaluation.

- [Postcards](#)

Postcards can be used to collect information quickly, and they can also be used to provide a short report on evaluation findings (or an update on progress).

- [Website communications](#)

These days, having a website is common practice for development organizations working beyond the community level.

This has opened the possibilities of disseminating information such as that coming from evaluations.

## **Presentation events**

- Presentation audiences are likely to be most interested in only a portion of the full evaluation report, such as the key findings or a lesson learned about evaluation methods. Thus, it is wise to focus the presentation on only that portion, while making the fuller report available to anyone interested.

- [Conferences](#)

Attendance at professional conferences to understand how other evaluators frame and discuss their findings is a key component of building evaluation capacity.

- [Feedback workshop](#)

A feedback workshop is a meeting that brings together evaluators and key stakeholders in which the findings of an evaluation are discussed.

- [Teleconference](#)

Teleconferences can be used to facilitate the discussion of evaluation findings via telephone.

- [Verbal Briefings](#)

Verbal briefings are a way of providing specific information to an audience of interested participants allowing for a structured question and answer format based on that information.

- [Webconference](#)

Webconferencing is a conference hosted on the internet that can allow people who live in different parts of the world to get together.

## **Presentation materials**

- [Displays and exhibits](#)

Through the use of pictures, video or audio representations, maps or models, displays and exhibits can be used to draw attention to certain issues and assist in community engagement.

- [Flip charts](#)

Flip charts are large sheets of paper, usually positioned on a tripod, to be used with thick and differently coloured marking pens.

- [Posters](#)

A good poster communicates your message clearly, quickly and succinctly.

- [Powerpoint](#)

Structuring presentations with a series of powerpoint slides is now the most common way of presenting information to groups.

- [Video](#)

When produced well, videos provide an excellent means to convey messages coming out of an evaluation.

## **Creative and/or interactive**

- Presenting your report in a creative or interactive manner may be the most relevant means to get your information across if the context allows for it. You may consider working with an artist, a graphic recorder or designer to produce creative or interactive displays.

- [Cartoons](#)

Cartoon images can be used by evaluators to an understanding of program impact, scenes of program implementation, main findings or issues.

- [Data dashboard](#)

Stephen Few defines a dashboard as: "A data dashboard is a visual display of the most important information needed to achieve one or more objectives, with the data consolidated and arranged on a single screen so the information can be monitored at a gla

- [Infographics](#)

An infographic (information graphic) is a way of representing data visually so that the information is able to be quickly and easily understood.

- [Photographic reporting](#)

Adding photographs to an evaluation report can make it more appealing to readers and also make the key messages more memorable.

- [Poetry](#)

When preparing an evaluation report, one way of communicating vividly the experience of participants, or the situation in which the program has been implemented, is to present some of the findings in the form of a poem.

- [Reporting in pictures](#)

"A picture is worth a thousand words." Pictures or images provide another way of presenting information, and increasing understanding of your results.

- [Theatre](#)

There are several different ways of using theatre to communicate evaluation findings and engage intended users in responding to them.

## Graphic design

- Simple graphic design principles applied to your reporting documents will ensure readability and maximize learning. You can use design elements and visual depictions of your data to assist the reader.

- [Arrangement](#)

Arranging text and graphics on a page or slide can be a challenge for those not familiar with graphic design. Some basic principles can be easily implemented and boost readability and engagement.

- [Colour](#)

Blocks of background colour can help group similar items or separate reporting elements like sidebars.

Text intended for narrative reading should be set in black or dark grey on a white or very light background.

- [Images](#)

Written reports and presentations should always include images. Beyond just charts and graphs, photographs or drawings increase the relevancy of the material to the audience and make the report more engaging.

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## Visualise data

- Also refer to the task [visualising data](#) to find options.

## Resources

### Guides

- [A short primer on innovative evaluation reporting](#)

This book by Kylie Hutchinson presents a number of innovative ways of reporting, including different methods for presentations, narrative summaries, presenting findings visually and making use of digital outputs.

- [Visual language for designers: Guide](#)

"Within every picture is a hidden language that conveys a message, whether it is intended or not. This language is based on the ways people perceive and process visual information.

- [Evaluation report layout checklist](#)

This checklist from Stephanie Evergreen distills the best practices in graphic design and has been particularly created for use on evaluation reports.

## Ensure accessibility

Plan the reporting products to make sure they are accessible, including addressing issues such as limited time, low literacy, and disabilities.

## Methods

## General accessibility

- [One-Three-Twenty Five \(1:3:25\) Principle](#)

The 1:3:25 Principle is an evaluation report format with a one page outline of the main messages, a three page executive summary, and 25 pages that present the evaluation findings and methodology.

- [Plain language](#)

Plain English is a clear and concise writing style that ensures accessibility to the information for all stakeholders.

- [Chartjunk elimination](#)

Often the default settings in graphing programs include too much extraneous graphic detail that can confuse readers and cause them to stop engaging with the report.

- [Descriptive chart titles](#)

Descriptive subtitles in a chart can highlight the key takeaway points for the reader.

This is particularly important when graphs must stand alone, without the assistance of the evaluation to help interpret them.

- [Emphasis techniques](#)

A key to creating effective and accessible reporting documents is using effective techniques to emphasise important information.

- [Headings as summary statements](#)

Headings are extremely important to the readability of reports and documents.

## Specific accessibility barriers

- [Colour blindness](#)

People who are affected by colour blindness are unable to distinguish between different hues of certain colours.

- [Visual accessibility](#)

There are a number of ways that documents can be made more accessible to people who are blind or have low vision.

## Develop recommendations

Evaluations often make recommendations about how a program can be improved, how the risk of program failure can be reduced or whether a program should continue.



However, not all evaluations include recommendations. It is important to clarify whether recommendations are expected when developing the evaluation brief, terms of reference or scope of work.

If recommendations are developed on the basis of the evaluation findings, processes which involve stakeholders in developing and/or reviewing them will contribute to the use of the evaluation findings. The individual or group who has control of the evaluation – a manager or evaluation steering committee – should be consulted when developing recommendations as their support will probably be very important in order to ensure that the evaluation findings are disseminated and used.

## Methods

- [Beneficiary exchange](#)

This option involves facilitating a discussion of the findings amongst the beneficiaries of a project to provide feedback on the evaluation findings.

- [Chat rooms](#)

This method involves setting up an online space where evaluation findings can be discussed.

- [Electronic democracy](#)

Electronic democracy uses new and emergent forms of media to engage community members in seeking to influence the decision-making process by allowing them to apply pressure to those in power over a diverse range of issues.

- [External review](#)

This option involves facilitating a review of the evaluation by an external expert or anonymous reviewer.

- [Group critical reflection](#)

This option involves facilitating group stakeholder feedback sessions on evaluation findings.

- [Individual critical reflection](#)

This option involves facilitating independent feedback from particular individual stakeholders.

- [Participatory recommendation screening](#)

This option allows users to test recommendations with key stakeholders.

- [World cafe](#)

The world café is a methodology for hosting group dialogue which emphasizes the power of simple conversation in considering relevant questions and themes.

## [Support use](#)

Following up on the agency response to evaluation findings is an essential part of supporting use.

However, this is often a management responsibility rather than an evaluators. You can work with managers to provide a list of options for follow-up as part of the final report. Indeed, time should be built into the evaluation budget to account for support beyond report delivery.

There are a range of methods that can be used:

## Methods

- [Annual review](#)

Annual reviews of major evaluation findings and conclusions, based on evaluation studies completed during the preceding year, can be a useful way to support use.

- [Conference co-presentations](#)

Conference co-presentations take place when evaluators and evaluation commissioners or users jointly present findings or discussions about processes from an evaluation.

- [Data use calendar](#)

A data use calendar is produced to guide the collection of data and reporting requirements, as well as ensuring that analysis and evaluation data is actively used.

- [Policy briefing](#)

Policy briefs are designed to outline findings and recommendations in an accessible manner for specific target audiences.

- [Recommendations tracking](#)

Tracking recommendations involves keeping a transparent record of the responses to and action from recommendations.

- [Social learning](#)

Social learning is an approach to learning that focuses on how people learn through social interactions, such as modelling, making connections, sharing experiences and resources, collaboration and self-organization.

## Resources

### Guides

- [Evaluation policy of UNDP](#)

This evaluation policy from the UNDP has been developed to ensure there is a common basis for evaluations taking place within the organisation.

- [UNESCO guidelines for follow-up to evaluation findings](#)

This four-page paper provides an overview to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) procedures for evaluation follow up and a template for managers to detail their action plans in response to evaluation findings.

## **Blogs**

- [52 weeks of BetterEvaluation: Week 23: Tips for delivering negative results](#)