

# **Key Considerations for MANAGING EVALUATIONS**

**(Brief Reference Guide)**

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**How to Assess  
Readiness for  
Evaluation**

**How to Budget for the  
Evaluation**

**How to Identify and  
Select the Evaluation  
Team**

**How to Develop  
Comprehensive Terms  
of Reference (TOR)**

**Key Considerations for  
Managing Consultants**



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## **OVERVIEW**

There is a growing appreciation within the development community of the merits of conducting evaluations, and the fact that evaluation is a powerful tool for learning about what works, what does not and the reasons (WorldBank, 2006). As a result, there is increasing investment in evaluation by development actors including efforts to strengthen the quality of evaluations being undertaken.

The purpose of this guide is to provide ideas and suggestions on practical considerations and steps in ensuring that evaluations are commissioned and managed effectively. Many of the suggestions are based on practical experience by evaluation managers in the field.

## **KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR MANAGING EVALUATIONS**

Managing evaluation starts firstly with gaining consensus on when, what and how to evaluate the program, project or policy. Whose role it is to lead this process really depends on the organizational context and structure. However, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) professionals should be at the forefront of raising awareness about the role and value of evaluations, and working towards creating awareness on evaluation needs in the organization.

The following are key points for consideration in ensuring that evaluations are commissioned and managed effectively.

### **1- Defining the Scope of the Evaluation**

It is usually helpful to adopt a relatively strict definition of the scope of the evaluation right at the start. Determining what is important and to whom and identifying the essentials to include in the evaluation is significant. This is guided by analyzing the information needs of the program's major stakeholders, as well as identifying the resources available for the evaluation. Experience has shown that during the evaluation process stakeholders may wish to examine almost everything. It is therefore critical that evaluations are focused on those aspects that are determined to be most strategic to evaluate. The evaluation questions that are identified following a consultative process with stakeholders should be the guiding reference in defining the scope of the evaluation.

It is also important to consider the different phases and associated activities in conducting an evaluation. It is essential that the evaluation manager and the team understand and document the different steps. The guide below provides a summary of the key activities of the evaluation process.

## KEY PHASES IN CONDUCTING EVALUATION ACTIVITIES (WorldBank, 2006)

### Phase A: Planning the Evaluation

- Determine the purpose of the evaluation
- Identify evaluation goals and objectives
- Decide on the type of evaluation
- Review existing information of the program documents including monitoring information
- Describe the program
- Develop/refine conceptual framework
- Assess your own strengths and limitations
- Put together an evaluation team including stakeholders (based on their competencies and skills)

### Phase B: Selecting Appropriate Evaluation Methods

- Formulate evaluation questions and sub-questions
- Decide on the appropriate evaluation design (methodology for data collection, sample selection and size)
- Develop an evaluation schedule
- Develop a budget for the evaluation

### Phase C: Collecting and Analyzing Information

- Develop data collection instruments
- Pre-test data collection instruments
- Undertake data collection activities
- Analyze data
- Interpret the data

### Phase D: Reporting Findings

- Write the draft report; share it with stakeholders and revise as needed
- Complete the final evaluation report
- Decide on communication strategies for sharing the evaluation results
- Disseminate evaluation results
- Meet with project stakeholders to discuss and follow-up on findings

### Phase E: Implementing Evaluation Recommendations

- Develop a new/revised implementation plan in partnership with stakeholders
- Monitor the implementation of evaluation recommendations and report regularly on the implementation progress
- Plan the next evaluation

## 2- Assessing Readiness for Evaluation

Once the need for an evaluation has been established, it is important to assess whether or not an evaluation is feasible at this time. Is the project or program able and ready to conduct the evaluation? Judgement must be made based on the context in the organization including the resources available, the likely availability of information essential to the evaluation and the probability that the results of the evaluation could influence change. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) offers useful criteria for assessing the feasibility of conducting an evaluation.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING THE FEASIBILITY OF EVALUATION	
Timing and stakeholder availability	<p>Are there competing demands on staff and other stakeholders right now?</p> <p>Will the people that need to participate in the evaluation be able to do so at this time?</p> <p>Are there other matters that are more pressing?</p>
Programme and project design elements	<p>Are the objectives, outputs and activities clear enough to be able to evaluate progress, results and impact?</p>
Available information	<p>Is there adequate information to engage in an evaluation?</p>
Financial considerations	<p>Are sufficient funds available for the evaluation?</p> <p>Can you raise additional resources?</p> <p>Is the evaluation cost-effective?</p> <p>Are the benefits greater than the costs?</p>
Utility	<p>Is there a high probability that the evaluation exercise will be used to improve the project or programme?</p>

Source: IUCN (2004). *Managing Evaluations: A Guide for IUCN Programme and Project Managers*, page 14.

### 3- Budgeting for the Evaluation

Evaluation requires adequate resources and it is important that the budgeting process is comprehensive and covers the various costs related to the evaluation. It is also advisable that when planning a project, budget lines specific to evaluation activities should be included. Some of the costs include personnel, staff time, transportation, logistical costs, volunteers' or beneficiaries' transportation and sometimes accommodation. The following points emphasize aspects of a good evaluation budget:

- Relevant program staff should be involved in the budgeting process or consulted about the budget and should be encouraged to give feedback.
- Cost all elements of the evaluation activities, including volunteers, community activities and time.
- Include personnel to lead the evaluation activities.
- Calculate reasonable amount of time to complete evaluation activities.
- Evaluation and budget activities should be agreed upon by both staff and project donors.

**Appendix 1** provides a template for planning staff and consultants' time or Level of Effort (LoE) in implementing evaluation activities, including a budget line item in each area. This level of detail is essential in enabling managers to budget sufficiently for both internal and external human resources for any given evaluation.

#### A) Who Does the Budgeting?

Budgeting of evaluation activities usually is done by project staff responsible for the evaluation activities (This may be an M&E officer or a project coordinator). However, the evaluation budget should be prepared in consultation with other project staff and stakeholders to ensure that appropriate activities and costs are included.

#### B) When to Prepare the Evaluation Budget

The evaluation budget should be prepared at the time of planning and drawing budgets for all other program activities. This will help to harmonize costs and activities and suggest which activities can be jointly implemented to avoid duplication and waste of resources.

#### C) How Much Should Be Budgeted for Evaluation?

The amount depends on the various needs for evaluation, the complexity of the project, what activities will be implemented, the tools needed, and the capacity needs of the project officers. Some considerations include:

*Various Donors recommend different budget thresholds for Evaluation; however these tend to range between 3-10% of the overall program budget. It's also important to note that donors tend to have varying policies on what the evaluation budget should cover. Some include all monitoring and evaluation activities while others consider this as budget for only formal evaluations and might consider a separate allocation for monitoring activities.*

- The amount of money and time that is available for overall project activities
- Source of funding; whether the resources are locally raised or donor funded
- The objectives and scope of the evaluation; whether it is a small-scale or large-scale evaluation
- Travel costs involved
- Materials and resources required: paper, photocopying, note books, fuel, telephones, communication, computer hardware and software
- Person conducting the evaluation (internal program officer or external evaluator) and the skills of that person
- Participation by community members, leaders and volunteers – and if they will need allowances to be paid for their involvement
- Staff time and labor input of the program people that will be involved

#### **D) Obstacles to Good Budgeting for Evaluation**

There are factors that can inhibit good budgeting for evaluation activities. Projects need to be conscious of these for effective evaluation budgets:

- Lack of adequate knowledge on the value of evaluation in the project/program life cycle. Some program managers/staff are not aware of what evaluation is and what activities should be budgeted for under evaluation
- Minimal priority given to evaluation activities
- Lack of budgeting skills among project staff and the M&E officers
- Limited local and donor funding for evaluation activities
- Organizational structure of the project – when M&E/project staff are not involved in the planning and budgeting for project activities, including evaluation activities

#### **4- Selecting an Evaluation Team**

The evaluation team appropriate for a given evaluation should be determined by the evaluation's rational and overall purpose. Given the wide range of evaluation subjects for any project, program or policy, it is important to determine what needs to be undertaken by internal evaluators versus those that would be best suited for external evaluation. External evaluations have the advantage of being generally viewed as more objective as the evaluator is independent and not part of the program delivery team. This is, however, not necessarily what is most needed if, for instance, the organization wishes to undertake process evaluations to understand how program operations are working in the field. In such cases, an internal team comprising of the program team including field staff would be in a better position to implement a cost effective-evaluation.



There are several options for conducting evaluation activities, including:

- Contracting an external evaluator
- Using both internal and external personnel
- Using program personnel

<b>SKILLS NEEDED BY THE EVALUATION TEAM</b>	
<b>EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS</b>	<b>ROLES AND SKILLS</b>
Evaluation director/team leader	Responsible for coordinating the planning and implementation of evaluation activities. This includes supervising project staff and the evaluation team. S/he must have sound knowledge and experience in evaluation, including data analysis and interpretation, and writing and editing of reports.
Specialist in the field related to the project. e.g., if the program is HIV/AIDS- related, you would need an HV/AIDS Specialist	Guides the planning and implementation of the specific requirements of the program area. Provides technical support, and helps develop sound recommendations. S/he must have in-depth expertise in the area of the program.
Program staff members	Responsible for implementing the program, but because they are critical stakeholders in the process, they should be included in the evaluation planning, analysis and interpretation processes.
Field team may include program staff and other stakeholders including supervisors and interviewers	Ideally, all members of the team should be recruited early to enable them to participate in various aspects of the evaluation activities. How the team is comprised and the number of members depends on local resources and the skill set of each person.
Community members, who may include program participants and other stakeholders representing community structures or who are interested in the program	They also should be recruited early so that they can participate in all stages of the evaluation. Research shows that involving community members in evaluations may result in obtaining better quality data, findings more likely to be used, fostering greater ownership of the M&E processes and the program overall, and developing M&E skills. However, not everyone can be involved in all parts. Whom to involve, how, and in which parts of the evaluation depends on the purpose of the evaluation and available resources.

## Managing the Solicitation Process for External Evaluators

The solicitation process often starts with developing and publishing the call for expression of interest- see example in Appendix II. This is usually the first communication that is sent out to the general public (open competition) or to selected potential consultants (limited competition), to let them to know about your organizations intention to undertake an evaluation. In most cases, due to donor solicitation requirements, this call must be published in a newspaper to enable potential consultants to learn about the opportunity. Competitive bidding often prevails over other less complicated options because it is the *modus operandi* or best suited for demonstrating transparency, for being fiscally responsible and for encouraging competition based on substantive criteria (OECD, 2006).

The call for expression of interest must include clear instructions on the application procedure and what steps will be taken to select the best applicant. It is usually a good idea to include multiple rounds in the selection process in such a way that limits excessive time investment for reviewing lengthy submissions. The initial call usually only includes requests to submit a letter of intent and CVs, which are assessed to identify the best 8-10 applicants based on their qualifications and experience. Only these selected 8-10 applicants are then provided with the detailed TOR and requested to participate in the Request for Proposal (RFP) process. The RFP process must include clear guidelines (through the detailed TOR) about how the best proposal will be determined.

**The selection team/committee** usually comprised of key stakeholders whose roles include reviewing all the applications and selecting the most suitable consultant or team to undertake the evaluation. Selecting team members requires a wide range of skills so that they can undertake a comprehensive review of applications and determine which applicant is best suited to meet the needs of the evaluation.

### **Key Questions when Reviewing Bids from Consultant Consortia**

Is the consortium a reasonable size (not more than 3 organizations as a general rule)?

Is the composition of the consortium based on complementary experience, expertise and knowledge?

Is there a tactical notion involved that members are selected because of their country of origin?

Have different members of the consortium already worked together in comparable settings?

Have consortium members agreed on the approach to the methodology and division of labor?

Are tasks, duties, responsibilities and income divided in a transparent and fair manner?

Has a system of quality assurance been agreed to guarantee adherence to stipulated standards?

Are the administration and financial management of the evaluation scattered across the consortium or are they concentrated in the hands of one partner as should be the case?

**Source: OECD 2006- guidelines for managing joint evaluations. Box 7. Page 25**

Skills required may include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Evaluation technical expertise, such as evaluation design, data collection and analysis, and report writing
- Key programmatic-technical skills related to the program being evaluated
- Programmatic field experience
- Financial management
- Contract management

### **Selection Criteria**

The selection criteria for the winning proposal must be determined upfront and included in the TOR in order to ensure transparency and consistency in the selection process. Specific guidance should be provided to the selection team on how to apply the scoring system.

Decision processes for selecting team members should be fully documented in a standardized manner.

Some of the common challenges /pitfalls in the solicitation process include:

- Failure to adhere to a full and open competitive process by unjustifiably soliciting applications from only a few individuals
- Failure to communicate any changes in the scope or guidance provided to all applicants in order to ensure that they all have the same information and opportunity to respond
- The selection team members not having the same understanding of the scoring procedure
- Under-budgeting the time needed to review submissions and communicate outcomes

## **5- Developing Comprehensive Terms of Reference (TOR)**

Development of a detailed terms of reference is a critical component and one worth spending a fair amount of time on to ensure that it is done properly. The TOR provides detailed information about the scope of the evaluation, and is usually the basis on which potential evaluators determine the development of a detailed evaluation plan. The TOR is a key element in the evaluation process as it helps to clarify the reasons for the evaluation, flags issues that have become apparent, indicates the general depth and scope required, and clarifies any imperatives for the evaluators (IUCN, 2004).

The TOR should be developed after consulting a range of stakeholders in order to ensure that there is general agreement about the evaluation purpose, key objectives and evaluation questions. Below is a sample outline of a TOR. The amount of detail provided in the TOR will depend on how much information is available and on how much influence those commissioning the evaluation want and the way in which the evaluation is designed and conducted.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE OUTLINE

### I. Introduction

- A. Background to the Evaluation
- B. Brief Description of the Program
- C. Program Objectives and Expected Outcomes/Existing Performance Data

### II. Purpose of the Evaluation

- A. Key Audiences and Uses
- B. Purpose and Evaluation Objectives

### III. Illustrative Evaluation Questions and Possible Indicators

### IV. Illustrative Evaluation Methodology

- A. Evaluation Design and Approach
- B. Sources of Data and Data Collection Methods
- C. Sampling Strategy
- D. Data Analysis Procedures

### V. Evaluation Team

This includes the size, qualifications and skills, language proficiency, areas of technical competence, in-country experience, evaluation methods and data collection skills, facilitation skills, gender analysis skills and participation of stakeholders required by the evaluation team.

### VI. Illustrative Scope of Work (SOW) with Key Activities and Deliverables

Include an outline for the SOW, including key activities that the consultants will undertake as well as the corresponding deliverables.

### VII. Administrative and Logistical Support

This section includes a description of roles and responsibilities with regards to logistical aspects of managing the evaluation such as scheduling appointments, making travel arrangements. Also included here is a brief description of what resources will be provided to the evaluation team such as the provision of office space, transportation and equipment.

### VIII. Timeframes

This provides a brief overview of the general schedule and timing of the evaluation (duration, phasing).

### IX. Reporting and Dissemination Requirements/Deliverables

This includes the evaluation plan, draft report, final report, debriefing in-country and with regional and HQ staff, and PowerPoint presentation.

### X. Budget

This includes the estimated total amount of funds available (or range) for the evaluation. This enables bidding firms to develop a detailed budget as part of their proposal submission.

## **Key Considerations for Managing Consultants**

It is essential that the most appropriate contracting mechanism is identified and used. These may include time and material contracts, fixed price contracts or cost reimbursement contracts. The choice often depends on a number of factors such as the length and scope of the contract, and the abilities and experience of the contractor to manage logistics related to the evaluation.

For time and material or cost reimbursement contracts, close monitoring of the budget throughout the lifecycle of the evaluation is essential. These contracting mechanisms are commonly used in instances where costs haven't been fully established or where the organization commissioning the evaluation prefers to directly manage the budget. In the case of fixed price contracts, the detailed budget is negotiated upfront and approved. This negates the need for budget monitoring by the commissioners of the evaluation and all amounts agreed to, are payable to the contractor on submission of deliverables.

In developing the evaluator's contract, it's essential to ensure that all standard provisions for contracting are included and that very specific deliverables and timeframes are set in the scope of work. Consultants often have overlapping contracts and in some instances more than one contract in a given time period. In such situations, the consultant will usually do more for the client who follows up closely on the deliverables.

Approval of deliverables prior to payment is essential and provides a means for ensuring quality of the final products. It is important to ensure that expectations are clear from the beginning and that systems for tracking progress of the work are established as part of the contract. This could for instance include deliverables that reflect status of the evaluation process:

- Submission of an evaluation plan, which includes a refinement of the evaluation's objectives, the evaluation questions, and plans and schedule for collecting and analysing data and reporting on the results
- Submission of field tools prior to undertaking data collection
- Submission of a field report after data collection
- Submission of a preliminary data analysis report

It is advisable that managers conduct regular checks on the consultant(s) as the evaluation is underway. For long projects, a reporting template outlining clear timeframes is strongly recommended. This must be instituted right from the beginning of the project so as to align expectations. In instances where strict deadlines must be adhered to, offering the consultant office space for the few days of desk review work, report writing and other office functions may prove useful.

## Appendix I: Planning and Budgeting Staff Time –Level of Effort (LOE) for the Evaluation

1. Initial Evaluation Conceptualization and Development of TOR		
Task	Estimated LOE	
	Pact staff	Consultant
Consult major stakeholder groups		
Develop evaluation purpose, objectives and questions Develop the TOR		
Solicit evaluation consultants		
Develop the detailed evaluation plan including data collection instruments		
<i>[Other]</i>		
<b>Subtotal</b>		
2. Preparing for and Undertaking Data Collection		
Task	Estimated LOE	
	Pact staff	Consultant
Prepare for data collection; contact stakeholders and schedule appointments		
Develop data collection instruments, include pilot testing		
Training field staff on the data collection		
Oversee data collectors; ensure the quality of data collection		
<i>[Other]</i>		
<b>Subtotal</b>		
3. Managing Data		
Task	Estimated LOE	
	Pact staff	Consultant
Design of data entry screen and codebook		
Train and oversee data entry personnel and data entry		
Enter data		
Manage data quality		
<i>[Other]</i>		
<b>Subtotal</b>		
<b>Total</b>		

4. Preparing for and Undertaking Data Analysis			
Task	Estimated LOE		
	Pact staff	Consultant	
Plan for data analysis; identify type of analysis for key variables			
Prepare the data; include data cleaning, coding and organize the data into a data master set			
Tabulate data, run data analysis			
Interpret finding and formulate conclusions and recommendations			
<i>[Other]</i>			
<b>Subtotal</b>			
5. Reporting and Dissemination			
Task	Estimated LOE		
	Pact staff	Consultant	
Develop draft report for review and feedback			
Write final evaluation report			
Prepare to disseminate evaluation findings			
Host dissemination workshops, meetings, etc.			
<i>[Other]</i>			
<b>Subtotal</b>			
<b>Grand Total</b>			

## Appendix II: Example of a Call for Expression of Interest

### Call for Expression of Interest to Undertake an Evaluation for the Pact SA HIV/AIDS Grant Management Program

- I. **Background:** On February 1, 2004 Pact initiated a Rapid Response HIV/AIDS Grants program for South Africa in support of USAID's strategic objective of "Increased Use of HIV/AIDS and Other Primary Health Care Services". The Rapid Response HIV/AIDS Program focused on providing grant award and administration services that allowed the U.S. Mission to South Africa to increase the resources available to local organizations implementing programs which addressed key technical focus areas of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS (PEPFAR). The overall goal sought was to "Reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS and improve health care for South Africans"

Pact, as recipient of the Associate Award, provided USAID/South Africa with a multi-layer program of high quality grants management; targeted, appropriate technical assistance and capacity building; and results reporting, capturing the grant making processes and sub-grantee performance data. The program was slated to run thru September 30, 2008. The main program results hypothesis is that the combined effect of grant making and capacity building should result in improved grantee competences to deliver more efficient and high quality programs at a large enough scale that leads to improved prevention practices as well as increased health, emotional and economic well-being of PLWHA and OVC. These changes should result in reduced HIV/AIDS prevalence and improved quality of life and survival of PLWHA and OVC among the target population.

The evaluation seeks to determine the extent to which Pact's grant making and capacity building services enhanced the capability of grantees to implement more efficient, high quality and scalable HIV and AIDS programs.

#### II. Key Evaluation Questions

The 3 key broad evaluation questions include the following,

- a. What key features of the Pact SA grant management program enhanced or prohibited successful implementation and achievement of the key program objectives?
- b. What were the key results, strengths and weaknesses of the capacity development processes implemented by Pact SA under the grant management program?
- c. What key elements in the Pact SA internal management structure and systems contributed (positively or negatively) to achievement or failure to achieve program results over the implementation period?

#### III. Evaluation Team

The evaluation team (Consulting firms or Consortiums/joint venture partnerships) should comprise of individuals with the following expertise

- Extensive development evaluation experience with substantial work experience in the African context
- HIV/AIDS programs and grant management expertise
- Familiarity/experience with the South African HIV/AIDS context, particularly the NGO sector
- Extensive experience with working with the US government and particularly USAID funded programs
- Extensive experience with USAID rules and regulations for grants and financial management
- Wide-ranging Capacity development expertise
- Vast qualitative research expertise
- Vast quantitative research experience including statistical expertise

- IV. **Assignment timeframes:** The assignment is for a 60-70 days duration, spread between mid-April and August 2009. The Evaluation will include extensive travel to the field as well as interviews with key stakeholders in Pretoria and Washington DC.
- V. **Application Processes:** Interested consultants are required to submit a letter of interest including their evaluation profile and experience along with their resumes and references. Based on this, Pact will select candidates that best meet minimum qualifications and experience requirements. The deadline for initial submissions is 9<sup>th</sup> April 2009
- The selected candidate consultants will be notified by 13<sup>th</sup> April and provided with a draft terms of reference based on which they will develop a brief evaluation proposal and budget for submission by 17<sup>th</sup> April. Pact's technical review committee will select the winning proposal and notify constituted by Pact. The proposal should include the evaluation methodology, data collection processes as well as a preliminary work plan for completing the work and deliver the outputs. The winning proposal will be selected and consultant(s) notified by 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

**Interested consultants should submit their initial letter of interest and resume to the MERL Manager at [merl@pactsa.org.za](mailto:merl@pactsa.org.za) no later than 9<sup>th</sup> April 2009. Only candidates selected for submission of the evaluation proposals will be contacted.**



## REFERENCES

- 1- The World Bank Independent Evaluation Group (2006). *Conducting Quality Evaluations under Budget, Time and Data Constraints*.
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- 3- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development -OECD (2006). DAC Evaluation series: *Guidance for Managing Joint Evaluations*.