

Using the BetterEvaluation Rainbow Framework

The BetterEvaluation Rainbow Framework prompts you to think about a series of key questions. It is important to consider all these issues, including reporting, at the beginning of an evaluation. The Framework can be used to plan an evaluation or to locate information about particular types of methods. An expanded version of the framework showing options or methods for each question can be downloaded from our website: <http://betterevaluation.org/plan>.

1. MANAGE an evaluation or evaluation system

Manage an evaluation (or a series of evaluations), including deciding who will conduct the evaluation and who will make decisions about it.

Understand and engage stakeholders: Who needs to be involved in the evaluation? How can they be identified and engaged?

Establish decision making processes: Who will have the authority to make what type of decisions about the evaluation? Who will provide advice or make recommendations about the evaluation? What processes will be used for making decisions?

Decide who will conduct the evaluation: Who will actually undertake the evaluation?

Determine and secure resources: What resources (time, money, and expertise) will be needed for the evaluation and how can they be obtained? Consider both internal (e.g. staff time) and external (e.g. previous participants' time) resources.

Define ethical and quality evaluation standards: What will be considered a high quality and ethical evaluation? How should ethical issues be addressed?

Document management processes and agreements: How will the evaluation's management processes and agreements be documented?

Develop planning documents for the evaluation: What needs to be done to design, plan and implement the evaluation? What planning documents need to be created (evaluation framework, evaluation plan, evaluation design, evaluation work plan)?

Review evaluation (do meta-evaluation): How will the evaluation itself be evaluated including the plan, process, and report?

Develop evaluation capacity: How can the ability of individuals, groups and organisations to conduct and use evaluations be strengthened?

2. DEFINE what is to be evaluated

Develop a description (or access an existing version) of what is to be evaluated and how it is understood to work.

Develop initial description: What exactly is being evaluated?

Develop programme theory / logic model: How is the intervention understood to work (program theory, theory of change, logic model)?

Identify potential unintended results: What are possible unintended results (both positive and negative) that will be important to address in the evaluation?

3. FRAME the boundaries for an evaluation

Set the parameters of the evaluation – its purposes, key evaluation questions and the criteria and standards to be used.

Identify primary intended users: Who are the primary intended users of this evaluation?

Decide purpose: What are the primary purposes and intended uses of the evaluation?

Specify the key evaluation questions: What are the high level questions the evaluation will seek to answer? How can these be developed?

Determine what 'success' looks like: What should be the criteria and standards for judging performance? Whose criteria and standards matter? What process should be used to develop agreement about these?

4. DESCRIBE activities, outcomes, impacts and context

Collect and retrieve data to answer descriptive questions about the activities of the project/program/policy, the various results it has had, and the context in which it has been implemented.

Sample: What sampling strategies will you use for collecting data?

Use measures, indicators or metrics: What measures or indicators will be used? Are there existing ones that should be used or will you need to develop new measures and indicators?

Collect and/ or retrieve data: How will you collect and/ or retrieve data about activities, results, context and other factors?

Manage data: How will you organise and store data and ensure its quality?

Combine qualitative and quantitative data: How will you combine qualitative and quantitative data?

Analyse data: How will you investigate patterns in the numeric or textual data?

Visualise data: How will you display data visually?

5. UNDERSTAND CAUSES of outcomes and impacts

Collect and analyse data to answer causal questions about what has produced outcomes and impacts that have been observed.

Check the results support causal attribution: How will you assess whether the results are consistent with the theory that the intervention produced them?

Compare results to the counterfactual: How will you compare the factual with the counterfactual - what would have happened without the intervention?

Investigate possible alternative explanations: How will you investigate alternative explanations?

6. SYNTHESISE data from one or more evaluations

Combine data to form an overall assessment of the merit or worth of the intervention, or to summarise evidence across several evaluations.

Synthesise data from a single evaluation: How will you synthesise data from a single evaluation?

Synthesise data across evaluations: Do you need to synthesise data across evaluations? If so, how should this be done?

Generalise findings: How can the findings from this evaluation be generalised to the future, to other sites and to other programmes?

7. REPORT AND SUPPORT USE of findings

Develop and present findings in ways that are useful for the intended users of the evaluation, and support them to make use of them.

Identify reporting requirements: What timeframe and format is required for reporting?

Develop reporting media: What types of reporting formats will be appropriate for the intended users?

Ensure accessibility: How can the report be easy to access and use for different users?

Develop recommendations: Will the evaluation include recommendations? How will these be developed and by whom?

Support use: In addition to engaging intended users in the evaluation process, how will you support the use of evaluation findings?