Navigating Program Evaluation:

# A Practical Guide for Youth Leaders

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LAWSON FOUNDATION

The Lawson Foundation is a Canadian family foundation that invests in and engages with ideas, people and organizations that contribute to the healthy development of children and youth.

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*Photo/Illustration Credit and Design: Fuse Consulting Ltd.*

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# Before You Begin

## Getting started

As a youth leader, you're designing programs to support communities that matter to you. Let's start by saying how amazing we think that is. We also know it can be a huge challenge to find ways to evaluate the programs you develop. And you need to be able to evaluate your work for many reasons, not least of which so that you can tell everyone — colleagues, funders, and your peers — about the impact you're making.

So we're here to help.

This guide can help you understand what an evaluation plan looks like, why it's so important, and how you can build it into your planning process. If you're working with an organization that uses external evaluators, we'll show you how to work with them too.

It's fair to say that evaluation is more complex than what we have provided here. This toolkit will help you get started on all the major components, but it's not a comprehensive step-by-step guide. So, think of this as an introduction to get you started, but not the final word.

## How to use this guide

This guide is divided into five chapters. Each section will help you develop a different stage of your evaluation plan.

In each chapter you'll find:

- An overview of the planning stage
- Questions to help you prepare
- Suggestions from some seasoned pros
- Resources for more information
- A corresponding worksheet (see also the worksheet section at the end of this toolkit).

Reading through the guide will help you get started on your evaluation journey and make sure your preparations suit your program and initiatives.


An evaluation plan provides direction on your learning journey.

# This guide is your compass.

## Where you're going

This guide aims to support you to develop an evaluation plan and execute it. Each chapter in the guide is supported by a worksheet, and when compiled together, they help you articulate your overall evaluation plan. Meanwhile, the rest of the supporting information, tips and resources will help you put that plan into action. The final chapter offers guidance on how to develop an evaluation report for use and sharing.

### 1 RESOURCING

This section outlines your evaluation team, timeline and budget.

Worksheet 1

### 2 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This section provides a shared understanding of your program and a basis for the evaluation questions and priorities. It usually includes a logic model or a desciption of the theory of change.

Worksheet 2

### 3 EVALUATION PURPOSE, QUESTIONS AND USERS

There are never enough resources or time! This section fosters transparency about the purpose and type of the evaluation, who will use the results, key evaluation questions and indicators.

Worksheet 3
Worksheet 4

### 4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND PLAN

This section covers data sources and appropriate methods, timing, and roles and responsibilities.

Worksheet 5

### 5 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION PLAN

This section outlines who will interpret results and how, including plans for review from users to increase transparency and validity of your process and conclusions.

Worksheet 6

### 6 USE, DISSEMINATION AND SHARING PLAN

Plans for use of evaluation results, communications, and dissemination methods.

Worksheet 7
Worksheet 8

**CHAPTER ONE**

# The Basics of Evaluation

## In this chapter

Let's look at what an evaluation is, why you do one, and how to start planning for it.

## What is an evaluation plan?

A program evaluation asks — and answers — questions about your program in a planned, systematic way. Questions like: *How does it work? How does it affect the people who participate?* These questions and answers help you understand whether your program is meeting your goals.

Evaluation is a great tool for learning. Ideally, it can help you spot patterns in the strengths of your program and the areas you need to improve.

## Why is evaluation so important?

Evaluating your project helps you see a clearer path in many ways, both while the program is running and afterwards. It can serve as a tool to help you decide where you need to go and how to get there.

Your evaluation can help you:

- Compare your original plans to how your program is really going, and make adjustments to keep you on track
- Learn from real experiences (and share those learnings with others)
- Learn systematically through trial and error
- Keep track of resources
- Show yourself, your group, and your funders that your program/initiative has an impact
- Produce summary and final reports
- Plan future priorities, events and activities

## Why make an evaluation plan?

Your evaluation plan is a written document that helps you lay out how you'll evaluate your program before you get started. Having a plan helps you evaluate when you need to, in the *way that's right* for your program. It helps you think through priorities, assess how much evaluation you can and should do (known as "defining the scope"), and get everyone on the same page. Everyone involved in the program — for example staff, management, participants and evaluators — needs to understand their roles and responsibilities and the details of the evaluation.

**Remember: the type of evaluation you're doing affects what your plan looks like. Some plans are quick, while others evolve with the program. Some plans are more in-depth and cover a longer time period, while others are minimal and have just a few specific goals.**

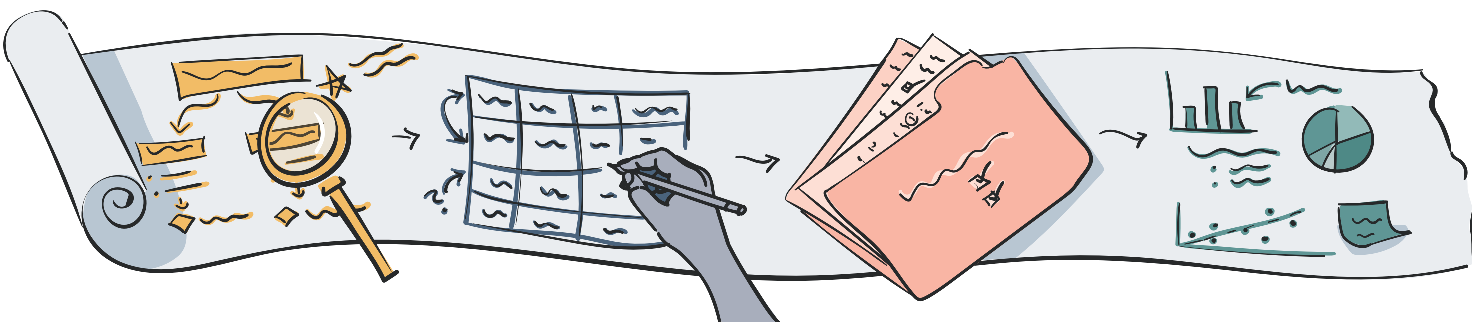
These are the four main steps to conducting your evaluation (each covered in more detail in the following chapters):

1. **Focusing your evaluation purpose and type:** State an overall purpose. Doing this helps you get clarity on *who* will be using the evaluation — and *how* — so you can focus your time and resources.

2. **Designing your evaluation plan:** Develop evaluation questions to guide your work and determine who is involved and how, timing, and how you will share results.

3. **Collecting and making sense of data:** Figure out what information you need to answer your key evaluation questions and who will help interpret the results. These details can help you understand the types of data you need to collect for your evaluation.

4. **Using and sharing your results:** Think about who should see your evaluation results, how to share your learnings and how you'll apply the results to your program.



## Pro Tips

- Treat your evaluation process as a partnership. Enlist the help of the people involved in your program, and they'll be more likely to invest over the long term.
- Evaluation is about learning, and then using what you learn to take action. You might not have all the answers at the end, and that's okay!
- There's no one "right" way to evaluate. You'll probably end up using a few approaches and methods to build the right fit.
- Evaluation and measurement are not the same thing. Evaluation looks at the outcome of a project, while measurement is just one part of tracking those outcomes.

## Internal or external evaluation — which is best?

Who should do the evaluation? Good evaluation needs more than one person. This is not a go-it-alone situation — it's a team effort and different people will bring different valuable experiences. It's best to assign a point person to be the main point of contact or lead the team, and then have a group of people support that person.

This guide can help you consider whether you have the internal capacity to do the evaluation, or whether you need help from an outside evaluator. You might even choose to use a hybrid approach, where you hire an outside evaluator, but your program team provides support.

Think about the type of approach that might work best for your program, your budget, and what you're trying to accomplish.

### TEAM ONE

**External evaluator, internal support**

**PROS**

- ✓ Might be more objective (they have no stake in the program)
- ✓ Could be more efficient (have more experience)
- ✓ Have a fresh perspective on program operations
- ✓ Might have more skills and experience than internal team

**CONS**

- ✗ Could be expensive (up to 20% of your program cost)
- ✗ May not understand the full picture of your program or audience

### TEAM TWO

**In-house evaluator, outside support**

**PROS**

- ✓ Less expensive than outsourcing entire evaluation
- ✓ An in-house evaluator will understand program objectives
- ✓ External support can offer additional skills/guidance

**CONS**

- ✗ Big time commitment for staff
- ✗ Evaluation may be biased
- ✗ Hiring an evaluator as a consultant may mean evaluation tasks don't get the level of attention they need

### TEAM THREE

**In-house evaluator, in-house support**

**PROS**

- ✓ Truly understands program/facilitators
- ✓ Less expensive than consultant
- ✓ Helps staff build skills for future projects

**CONS**

- ✗ In-house team may lack experience/skills
- ✗ Evaluation may be biased

### Budgeting time and resources

- Evaluation can cost between 3–10% of the overall project budget and staff time. For example, if your project is twelve months long, plan to spend anywhere from two weeks to one month planning and supporting the evaluation component.
- Generally, the budget should not be so small that it might compromise the accuracy and credibility of results, but it also should not cost so much (money, time or resources) that the program itself suffers. It's a delicate balance!
- Example expenses may include staff or consultant time, paying for data collection and analysis (e.g., surveys, honorariums or gifts for interview participants), equipment (computers, phones) and logistics (renting a room, travel, etc.).
- Clarify your evaluation team and overall timelines when you work through data collection methods, interpretation and analysis, and dissemination plans. Worksheets 4, 5 and 6 will help with this step.

## ASK THIS

- *What's the budget for evaluation?*
- *Do you have funds available?*
- *Do you have staff time you can allocate?*
- *What capacity do you have? Have you done one before?*
- *Do you have staff who have the training/skills/desire to do it?*
- *Are you able to objectively and ethically research our own program? Can you demonstrate this?*

***Worksheet 1** can help you map and determine whether you have the resources to do your own evaluation, or whether it's worth making room in your budget to hire an evaluator. You'll find it in the Worksheets section at the back of this toolkit.*

## DO THIS: WORKSHEET 1

***Evaluation Readiness:** There are several factors that come into play when you're considering whether you're ready do to an evaluation and who will do it. Worksheet 1 can help you decide if it's time to get started and start thinking about whether you have the resources to keep it in-house or hire an evaluation consultant.*

## TRY THIS: FIND A MENTOR

*A mentor who has worked in the nonprofit sector or has a lot of experience conducting evaluations can be a huge help in figuring out how to navigate your own evaluation. Mentorship can also help foster a culture of learning in your organization. Check out Capacity Canada's EvalU and Innoweave, who both use a mentorship model of workshops along with additional coaching.*

### Pro Tips : What should I look for in a mentor?

Look for someone with experience conducting evaluations and using multiple methods in different situations. This person can help you customize an evaluation strategy unique to your program. If you can, find someone who is also familiar with the context in which you're working (a context expert) and/or the issue on which you are working (a content expert).

### Acknowledging diversity & inequity

Each community has its own history and context, and you must take care to incorporate that into how you assess a program's success, or talk about findings and recommendations.

***The Center for Evaluation Innovation has developed the Equitable Evaluation Framework to align practices with an equity approach and to use evaluation as a tool to advance equity.***

*Center for Evaluation Innovation. (2018). Equitable Evaluation Framework Applies to all Evaluation. https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/insight/equitable-evaluation-applies-to-all-evaluation/*

### Indigenous approaches to evaluation

There are increasing efforts to adopt culturally appropriate evaluation and collaborative partnerships when working with Indigenous communities and their programs.

Culturally appropriate approaches recognize the importance of Indigenous knowledge, values and methods, and of involving the community in a meaningful, respectful way. If you are a non-Indigenous evaluator working within an Indigenous community, it will be important to form genuine relationships and collaborative partnerships to ensure that your evaluation reflects the community's priorities and needs.

For more information on Indigenous approaches to evaluation, you can visit:

***Explanation and descriptions of culturally competent (or sensitive) evaluation, culturally responsive Indigenous evaluation, and Indigenous-led evaluation.***

*NWT On The Land Collaborative.(n.d.). Indigenous Approaches to Evaluation. http://www.nwtontheland.ca/indigenous-approaches.html*

***Founded by Andrea L.K. Johnston, Johnston Research provides resources for Indigenous evaluation including tools, workshops, manuals, and consulting services.***

*Johnston Research Inc. (2023). Johnston Research. https://www.johnstonresearch.ca/*

***Reciprocal Consulting provides Indigenous culturally responsive evaluation, project consultation and mentorship, strategic planning, training and more.***

*Reciprocal Consulting. (2023). Reciprocal Consulting. https://reciprocalconsulting.ca/*

### Table: How to address common pitfalls of poor evaluation

| COMMON PITFALLS OF POOR EVALUATIONS | CHARACTERISTICS OF INCLUSIVE EVALUATION |
|---|---|
| Create knowledge for the sake of knowing, and collect data that's not always helpful to the community decision-making… | Include both program and community learning of what did and didn't work; collect data that's mutually beneficial to the program and the community. |
| Treat evaluation as an "add on" to the program, not an integral part of the program implementation… | Integrate evaluation into planning throughout the program, not just at the end. |
| Create a linear, focused evaluation that compares program performance to a logic model — often as the only benchmark… | Take a wholistic approach – look at the program's theory of change and shape metrics for success around broader benefits (for example, positive impact created outside the confines of the program). |
| Do not consider program context in findings. Findings are only considered valid if they apply to a broader population… | Put the community context at the forefront of how findings are evaluated. Findings are considered valid even if they don't apply to the general population. |
| Leave the community out of the evaluation creation. Funders decide what will be evaluated, by who, when, and how… | Involve the community in co-creating evaluation planning and implementation. |
| Collect mostly quantitative data, often through paper-based tracking and reports... | Collect both narrative and qualitative data through storytelling and other creative ways that allow self-expression. |
| May take place without the knowledge or support of the Indigenous Peoples or communities who are the focus of the evaluation... | Have the support of the communities they involve, and are implemented in a way that acknowledges various ways of knowing and being, as well as community context. |

*Adapted from Johnston, A. L. K. (2020). Western vs Indigenous evaluation. Johnston Research. Unpublished report.*

**CHAPTER TWO**

# Focusing Your Evaluation

## In this chapter:

The general intent of the evaluation is its *purpose*. Taking time to state an overall purpose helps you get clarity on *who* will be using the evaluation — and *how* — so you can focus your time and resources. Once you know the purpose, you'll be better able to select the right evaluation and data-collection activities for your program.

There are two key steps to focusing your evaluation:

1. Determining the *what* or the *it* you're evaluating, which usually requires mapping out a simple model of your program before you begin.
2. Determining *who* will use it and *how* they will use it, which usually requires talking to your primary users before you begin.

## Step One: Determine the what or it you're evaluating

Before you start planning your evaluation, describe your program or project in a way that clarifies your assumptions, the resources required, planned interventions and expected outcomes. There are many frameworks that help show the different components of a program.

Writing a description of your program (i.e., a narrative) helps ensure everyone understands what you're trying to achieve. The description should:

- Outline the issue you're addressing
- Include a list of program resources available to help implement activities
- Describe program activities linked to program outcomes through theory or best practices
- Indicate which stage of development the program is in (for example, is it a new program in the planning stage, are you implementing a planned program, or are you maintaining one you've run before?)
- The context or circumstances surrounding your program

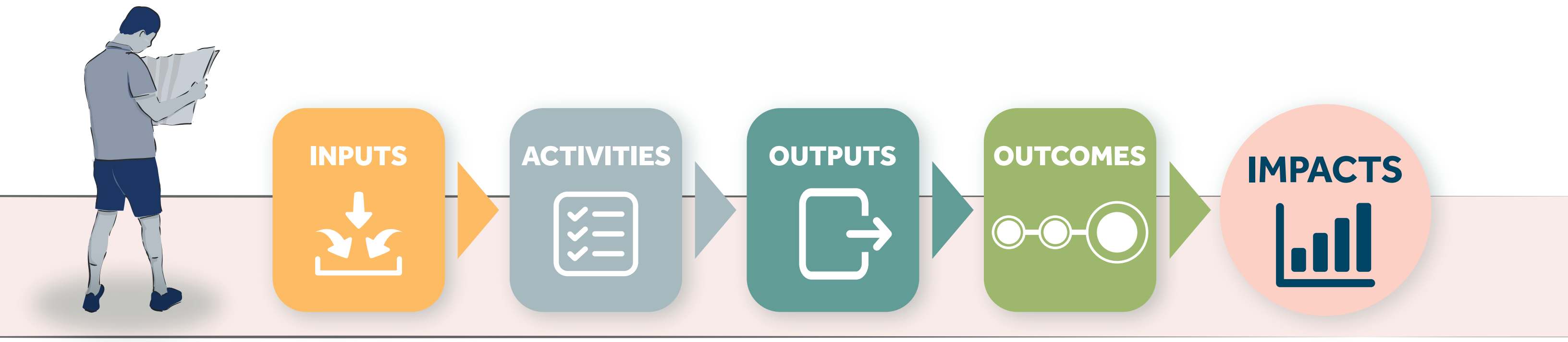
Two other common frameworks are a **logic model** and a **theory of change**.

### What is a logic model?

A logic model is a table or diagram that shows ***how*** your project or program will help meet an identified need. Logic models describe what you expect to happen but not *why* it will happen. They're good for linear programs.

### What is a theory of change?

A theory of change (TOC) is best described as a flow chart, diagram or description of ***why*** your program will create change. It can help you identify resources, main activities, and the end products or services (outputs). It also identifies all the changes (outcomes) that must happen to achieve your program goal. A theory of change helps illustrate the complex factors that create the change you'd like to see; it's ideal for complex programs that address multiple causes and have a variety of interventions.




*Adapted from: Analytics In Action. (n.d.). Theory of Change vs Logic Model.*

### Which one should you use?

The framework you select will depend on a few things. Logic models are most appropriate for simple, linear programs and/or limited evaluation resources, and they can be developed at any stage in your program. Theories of change are most helpful when interventions are more important, scenarios are more complex, and you have more time, resources and skills at your disposal. Theories of change work best when they're included in the early stages of your program development because they can help you identify and plan your activities.

### How does this relate to evaluation?

By laying out the different activities, outputs and outcomes for your program, you'll be able to share your goals and what you need to do to reach them. **You can use this information to help set the scope and activities of your evaluation plan**, as you'll find that you may not need to monitor or evaluate every component of your program. You can work with your primary users (more on this in Step Two) and evaluation team to figure out what you need to do at this moment.

***Worksheet 2****, found at the end of this toolkit, can help you work through the development of your logic model or theory of change.*

## DO THIS: WORKSHEET 2

***Templates for Logic Model and Theory of Change:*** *Use the templates in Worksheet 2 to create a logic model or Theory of Change (TOC) for your project.*

### Pro Tips

- Keep your logic model or TOC short (one page is usually enough) by focusing on highest priority content.
- Be as creative as you like with formatting.
- Consider group meetings to gather community input on your logic model or TOC.
- Consider sharing your logic model/TOC publicly, for example, on your website as an at-a-glance visual of what your program is all about.

## Step Two: Who is using your evaluation — and how?

One of the clearest places to focus the purpose of your evaluation is to identify the evaluation users, their evaluation questions, and how they will use the evaluation results.

### Determine your primary users

Primary users of the evaluation are the people in a position to do something with the results. Secondary users are other people who might be interested in knowing about the program, but who won't necessarily be influenced by the evaluation. One of the central challenges of any evaluation is understanding what the primary user wants to explore and how to organize the evaluation so it's useful for them. An evaluation designed without adequate user involvement is not a good use of anyone's time!

### Pro Tips

It might seem natural to make input from your funders or managers top priority. While their opinions are important, it's more important to listen to your program participants — the people your program is ultimately intended to serve. Focusing on funders' evaluations might mean missing some vital input that could help break down barriers and make your program truly beneficial for your target audience.

## ASK THIS

- *Who are the primary users of the evaluation?*
  - *Which groups/individuals are most likely to be affected by the evaluation?*
  - *Which groups/individuals are most likely to make decisions about the project/program being evaluated?*
  - *Whose actions and/or decisions will be influenced by their engagement with the evaluation process and/or evaluation findings?*
  - *Do these groups/individuals include diverse perspectives in a way that is meaningful, authentic and represents the values and the cultural context of all involved?*
- *Who are the secondary users?*
  - *Who else could learn or benefit from your results (for example, other organizations offering similar programming)?*
  - *How will you share your results with those people?*
- *Who benefits from the evaluation process? Who might feel a negative impact from it?*
- *How can the intended users of the evaluation be involved?*
- *What challenges/barriers might you face in identifying and involving users?*
- *Who are the target audiences of the evaluation (i.e., those who are interested in knowing about the evaluation findings)?*

Encouraging users to clarify intended uses, putting questions in order of priority, and identifying preferred methods can help focus the evaluation to guide future actions. You should only conduct an evaluation if you can identify the primary intended user(s) and use(s). Your program has limited human and financial resources — don't spend them on evaluation unless there are people who will read it! Fill out this worksheet to help answer these questions before you move forward.

## DO THIS: WORKSHEET 3

***Primary User Profile + Interview Guide:*** *Use Worksheet 3 to guide your interviews with primary users and use this information when you design your evaluation, scope of work, and evaluation instruments.*

### Terms to Know

**Logic model:** a visual representation of the essential elements of a program and how they fit together.

**Logic model components:**

**Inputs:** resources (human, financial, organizational, community, etc.) that go into the program.

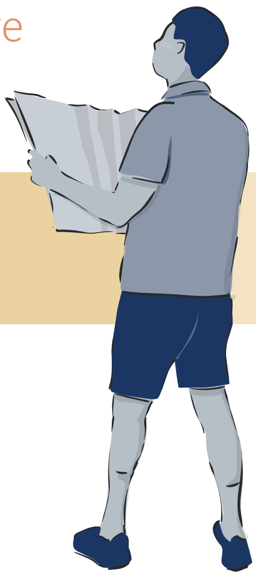
**Activities**: the program's processes and actions (such as staff training or program delivery) meant to achieve its goals.

**Outputs**: tangible products or services that come out of the program (for example, programming delivered or communication materials).

**Outcomes**: changes the program aims to achieve (for instance, in youth participants' knowledge, attitudes, skills, and/or behaviours); usually grouped as short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes.

# Youth Voice

## Mindsets and Fostering a Culture that Supports Failure



"It is not only about being willing to make a difference… but also being willing to fail and then continuing to persevere."

"When I changed my mindset to learn from failure I saw greater results in the projects I was working on."

"Nurturing cultures of failure, and reporting on failures, are essential to prevent redundant mistakes."

"Your mindset is the one thing you can control. If a person is willing to see obstacles as the path of success, then the project will flourish and grow."

CHAPTER THREE

# Designing Your Plan

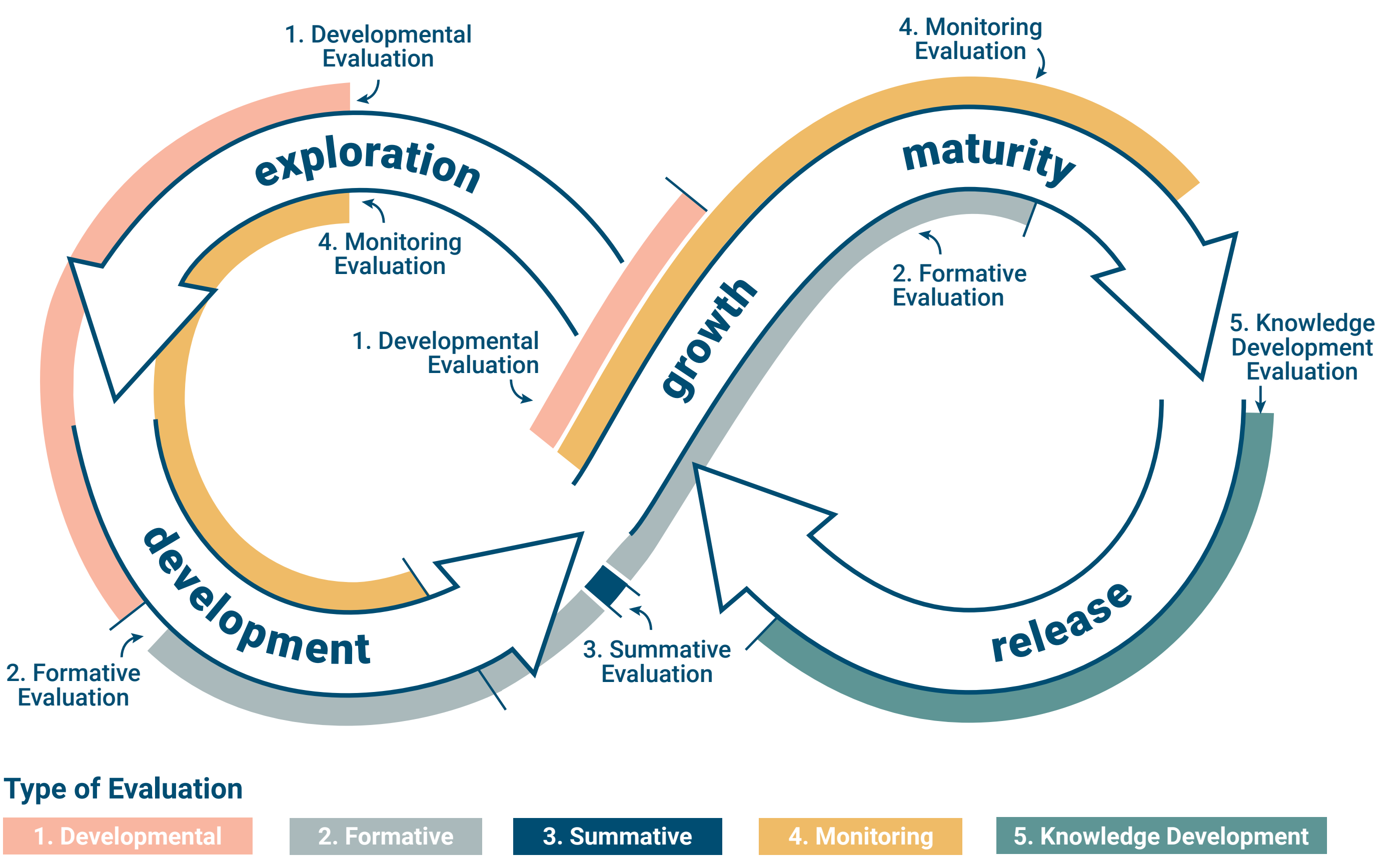
## In this chapter

Once you've clarified the purpose of your evaluation, it's time to choose the type of evaluation you'll undertake and design your evaluation plan. The design process includes determining your key evaluation questions, who is involved and how, timing, and how you will share it.

## Determine the type of evaluation you'll conduct

It's time to begin designing your evaluation plan. This is where you clarify the type of evaluation you're conducting based on the decisions you are trying to make and the purpose the evaluation is meant to serve. There are six common types of evaluation, and you can see how and when each type is used in the graphic and table below.

People working on complex issues should employ the right type of evaluation for the different phases of their efforts.




*Adapted from Patton, M.P., McKegg, K., Wehipeihana, N. 2016. Developmental Evaluation Exemplars: Principles in Practices. New York, NY: Guilford Press. p. 292.*

## Six major types of evaluation

| TYPE | PURPOSE | DECISIONS TO MAKE | QUESTIONS | COMMON METHODS | KEY FACTORS AFFECTING USE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. DEVELOPMENTAL | To help social innovators create – or radically adapt – a program based on trial and error. | What are our next steps in the creation or adaptation of this emerging program? | • What's going on in the community or environment in which the program operates? What can you control and not control?<br>• What is developing?<br>• What are the program's effects?<br>• What will the next iteration of the program look like? | • Complexity frameworks | • Are users interested in using data to make decisions?<br>• Are they okay with uncertainty or ambiguous results?<br>• Can you balance quality and speed of feedback?<br>• Do you have the resources to pull together and analyze multiple — and conflicting — data sources? |
| 2. FORMATIVE | To help program administrators improve the design and delivery of an existing program. | How can we improve the design and delivery of this program? | • What's working and what isn't?<br>• What are the program's strengths and weaknesses?<br>• What works for whom, when, and why?<br>• How can you increase results and reduce costs? | • Appreciative inquiry<br>• Participant feedback<br>• Reflexive practice | • Can you create an environment that's open to feedback and change?<br>• Is there trust?<br>• Are the evaluators skilled at facilitated learning?<br>• How relevant are the findings? |
| 3. SUMMATIVE | To help social innovators, funders and policy makers judge the value of a program. | Will we continue, discontinue or scale up the program? | • How well does the program achieve its goals?<br>• Does it provide value for money?<br>• How do its outcomes and costs compare with other options?<br>• How much do interventions contribute to outcomes?<br>• Should the program be sustained, wound down, replicated or scaled? | • Impact evaluation<br>• Cost-benefit analysis | • Is the evaluator credible and independent?<br>• Is the design rigorous? (Is it valid? Can it be generalized?)<br>• Do the decision-makers find the results significant?<br>• Is the program timely? |

| TYPE | PURPOSE | DECISIONS TO MAKE | QUESTIONS | COMMON METHODS | KEY FACTORS AFFECTING USE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. MONITORING | To help program administrators keep track of the general operations of a program. | What areas will we investigate more deeply? | • Are inputs and processes flowing smoothly?<br>• What are participation and dropout rates?<br>• Are these rates changing?<br>• Does the program produce outputs the way you anticipated?<br>• Are bottlenecks emerging?<br>• What variations occur across sub-groups? | • Routine reporting<br>• Performance indicators | • How often does reporting takes place? Is it relevant?<br>• Is data pulled from the field used at management level? Does your organization have the capacity and resources to manage your system? |
| 5. KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT | You're ready to enhance understanding and identify principles that make the program effective. | | • Can you see patterns and principles of effectiveness in programs, projects and sites?<br>• What lessons are you learning?<br>• What can you take from the results to help you evolve your practice? | • Lessons learned<br>• Synthesis evaluation | • Are your sources high-quality and comparable? What's the quality of the synthesis? Can users extrapolate from the results? Is there rigor of triangulation?<br>• Identifying principles that can inform practice |
| 6. ACCOUNTABILITY | To help external authorities account for how well administrators are managing and implementing a program. | Will we continue, discontinue, or expand political and financial support for the work? What changes will we require the program team make in the future? | • Are funds being used the way they were intended?<br>• Does the program meet its goals?<br>• Are problems handled well?<br>• Is the program being implemented according to plan?<br>• Are there quality-control mechanisms in place? Are they being used? | • Scorecards<br>• Performance measurement and monitoring | • Is the program meeting the standards of reporting mandated by government and funders?<br>• Has the integrity and credibility of the system and those reporting been validated?<br>• Is reporting consistent and balanced? |

*Adapted from Quinn Patton, Utilization Focus Evaluation. Fourth Edition. Sage Publication. Los Angeles. Pp. 140-141.*

***There are so many different options and methods in evaluation that it can be hard to work out which ones to choose for an evaluation. You don't need to figure it out alone! Remember, your evaluation consultant or mentor is there to help. The Better Evaluation website also has excellent information and supporting advice about common methods to support evaluation.***

## TRY THIS:

*Using the guiding information and questions in the table above, consider the different possible purposes of your evaluation. This will help you focus your questions, determine the type or method of your evaluation, and identify the different factors that affect how you can use your evaluation.*

## Asking the right questions

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) are the high-level questions that an evaluation is designed to answer, not specific questions that are asked in an interview or a questionnaire. Having an agreed set of KEQs makes it easier to decide what data to collect, how to analyze it, and how to report it. You should develop your KEQs with your evaluation users (see Worksheet 3) and consider the evaluation type, its intended users, and its intended uses. Refer to the table on pages 18–19 for example KEQs by evaluation type.

A set of evaluation questions is complete when the questions thoroughly address the purpose of the evaluation and evaluation users' information needs.

### Evaluation questions should be:

- Open-ended (not yes/no answers), yet reasonable, specific, and answerable.
- Specific enough to help focus the evaluation, but broad enough to be broken down into more detailed questions for data collection.
- Limited in number. You want a small enough number of questions to make sure your evaluation is feasible. Five (plus or minus two) questions is a good number.
- Relevant to the program's design, purpose, activities, or outcomes — and able to directly inform questions about the program.
- Generated with input from the intended audience and other stakeholders.

### Putting it into practice: Refining an example Key Evaluation Question

## ASK THIS

- *What do we need to measure to answer the key evaluation questions?*
- *What level of confidence do we need to have in our answers?*
- *Do we need to make comparisons over time or with other groups to answer the questions?*
- *What level of change will be realistic to measure?*
- *What do we already know about who we are working with?*
- *What are we doing with our clients that can provide opportunities to collect data?*
- *What information could other sources of data provide us with?*
- *Are there data sources we can use that will either confirm or provide alternative explanations for the results of the program?*

### Pro Tips

Choose the most important evaluation questions to help capture what you want (and need) to learn from the evaluation. Only choose a few! You want to keep the evaluation manageable and make sure the questions match your evaluation type and your program's stage of development.

It can be helpful to imagine scenarios where the answers to the KEQs are being used. This can help you check that the KEQs are likely to be relevant and useful, and that they cover the range of issues that the evaluation is intended to address.

## DO THIS: WORKSHEET 4

***Prioritize and eliminate questions:*** *In Worksheet 3, you defined your primary user's questions. Now use Worksheet 4 to determine how you can answer them, as well as your timelines and top priorities.*

### Terms to Know

**Data:** information collected, such as measurements, records, recordings, or observations.

**Data collection**: process of gathering data systematically to help answer evaluation questions.

**Data analysis**: process of making sense of data collected, typically to support the work, goals, and plans of the program being evaluated.

**Data management**: activities surrounding the collection, storage, security, sharing, and use of data; includes protection of evaluation participants' identities.

**Privacy**: individuals' right to choose how, when, and with whom to share their personal information.

**Confidentiality**: individuals' identities and responses are not shared outside the evaluation team.

**Anonymity**: no identifying information such as names or addresses that can be traced to specific individuals.

CHAPTER FOUR

# Collecting, Organizing, Analyzing and Making Sense of Your Data

## In this chapter

Collecting, organizing and analyzing your data helps you build your story. This data helps answer "What happened?" and "So what does it mean?"

## COLLECTING: Choose your data collection method

Once you define your Key Evaluation Questions, you can begin to consider how you'll collect your data. What works best for your program or organization? What kind of resources do you have available? The answers to these questions may help rule out some evaluation types and point to information gaps that need filling.

When you think about collecting data, think about:

- The purpose of your evaluation. Can you gather information that you can analyze and present in a way that answers your evaluation questions?
- Your participants. Consider their values, availability, access, literacy levels, and culture.
- Resources. Make sure you choose a method that you can achieve with the resources (time, money, staff) at your disposal.
- Benefit to participants. Is this reciprocal? Can you seek out questions that your participants are also interested in? Can you share with them?
- The type of information you need. Numbers? Percentages? Stories? Real-world examples?
- Interruption to participants. How intrusive is the process? Will it be bothersome?
- Culture. Make sure you take into account the norms, traditions, and standards of the community you're working with.
- Bias in data collection. Bias can occur in both collection and analysis — for example, by asking leading questions in a survey, or over- or under-representing a particular group among participants. Watch out for these biases and take care to address them before you begin collecting and analyzing data.

Data helps you tell your story. To use your data effectively, we use different methods for different reasons:

- **Qualitative (descriptive)** methods help give you an understanding of participants' reasons, opinions, and motivations. For example, answers to the question, "What part of the program did you find most useful?" is qualitative data.
- **Quantitative (numerical)** methods help measure a particular behaviour or other item of interest. For example: "How many times have you brushed your teeth in the past week?"

Program evaluations almost always include both types of data. Together, they help paint a picture of the whole story. For example, your evaluation might include:

- Interviews (qualitative data) after a survey (quantitative data) to better understand results.
- An online poll (quantitative data) to test a theory that has emerged from a conversation with focus-group participants (qualitative data).
- Mixed methods (both qualitative and quantitative) to help understand the breadth and depth of an issue in multiple ways.

## Overview of common data collection methods

### DOCUMENT REVIEW

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A review of existing documents or records, such as project records and reports, policies or procedures, written correspondence, photos, and more.<br>*Cost: typically low; depends on the number of documents reviewed.* | This method can...<br>☑ Use a flexible format<br>☑ Easily produce quantitative data<br>☑ Possibly produce generalizable information | Other considerations:<br>• Data might be out of date or difficult to access.<br>• You may not find the exact data you are looking for.<br>• Changing rules for recordkeeping could make analyzing trends difficult.<br>• You should understand how records were compiled so you can assess the quality of the data. |

### INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| These one-on-one conversations with specific individuals who have knowledge about a topic of interest are usually open-ended, allowing you to ask follow-up questions to pursue topics in-depth.<br>*Cost: typically low; typically low; depends on the number and duration of interviews conducted, interpretation needs, etc.* | This method can...<br>☑ Use a flexible format<br>☑ Easily produce qualitative data | Other considerations:<br>• Interviewers must be careful to ensure they don't bias information.<br>• Interviews can be a useful exploratory tool before you design a structured survey.<br>• Findings are about individual experiences or opinions. While common themes might emerge, findings can't be generalized. |

### FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| These structured interviews with small groups (6-12 individuals) use both standardized and follow-up questions to collect information about people's experiences, feelings, and preferences.<br>*Cost: typically low; depends on the number and duration of discussions held, needs for interpretation, etc.* | This method can...<br>☑ Use a flexible format<br>☑ Easily produce qualitative data | Other considerations:<br>• Good for gathering feedback about a service or product.<br>• Gives information on group dynamics.<br>• Requires a good facilitator.<br>• A few individuals may sidetrack or dominate discussion.<br>• Can be difficult to analyze findings. |

### SURVEYS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Surveys systematically collect information from a defined population. They may be self-administered (respondents complete a questionnaire) or enumerated (responses are collected through interviews).<br>*Cost: can be high; depends on sample size and how the survey is administered, language barriers, or the need to train enumerators.* | This method can...<br>☑ Easily produce quantitative data<br>☑ Possibly produce generalizable information | Other considerations:<br>• Survey design takes time and often requires testing/piloting.<br>• Survey design requires knowledge of the subject area and specialized skills in survey questionnaire development.<br>• Accuracy depends on sample size and who is included.<br>• Your sample is limited to willing and reachable respondents.<br>• You may have low response rates.<br>• How your survey is administered (via questionnaire or through an interview) can raise other considerations. |

### OBSERVATION

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Observation involves watching or looking at an event, process, or place to gather more information about it. An observer uses a checklist or other tool to guide what they're looking for, then documents what they see and analyzes the results.<br>*Cost: high; depends on the number of observation sessions you conduct and whether staff requires training.* | This method can...<br>☑ Easily produce qualitative data | Other considerations:<br>• Allows you to study an action, process, or place in real time.<br>• May reveal problems or patterns that people aren't aware of or can't describe.<br>• Susceptible to observer bias.<br>• People being observed may behave differently because of the presence of an observer.<br>• Observations require sufficient time.<br>• The results can be difficult to analyze. |

*Adapted from Switchboard TA. (2021, January 27). Quick reference table: Overview of common data collection methods. Switchboard. https://switchboardta.org/resource/quick-reference-table-overview-of-common-data-collection-methods/*

## DO THIS: WORKSHEET 5

***Fitting the Method to the Evaluation Question(s) + Data Collection Plan:*** *Use this worksheet to choose your methods and think about how they'll match your evaluation questions. A mismatch between evaluation questions and methods can mean your information is incomplete or even inaccurate.*

## Analysis and interpretation - What happened and so what?

### What to do with your data

Now that you've collected your data, you need to organize, analyze, and interpret it to identify learnings and use the results to make decisions to improve your program.

- **Organize**: Clean up your findings and organize them so they're easy to analyze.
- **Analyze and summarize**: Analyzing data to summarize it and looking for patterns is an important part of every evaluation. Examine your quantitative and qualitative data. Tallying survey responses or counting program activities is quantitative analysis. Studying interview responses or the answers to open-ended survey questions is qualitative analysis. Summarize or combine data to form an overall assessment of what happened. Keep in mind that it is helpful to visualize data – think charts and graphs!
- **Interpret the data and draw conclusions**: So what? What does your analysis tell you? Can you compare your data to other available data to better understand the results? Sometimes it's helpful to compare your results with results from a similar program. Sometimes you may need to go back and get better data, and that's okay too.

To refine your recommendations and focus your analysis, think about:

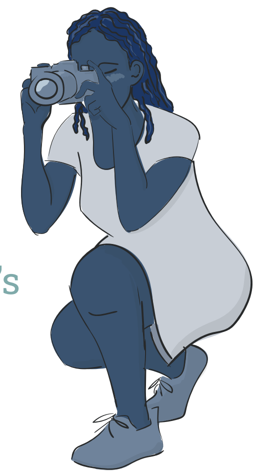
- What recommendations do you want to make?
- What actions should be taken based on what you learned?
- Who should see the evaluation findings?
- What findings will interest different stakeholder groups? How will you reach them?
- How can you use this evaluation experience to learn as a team?
- When should you share recommendations so they're timely and have maximum effect?

### Pro Tips

It's easy to underestimate the resources, time, and expertise required to clean and analyze data, or to budget too little time to involve primary users in the interpretation and review of preliminary results. Allowing enough time for analysis and involvement increases the transparency and validity of your process and conclusions.

## DO THIS: WORKSHEET 6

***Analysis and interpretation planning:*** *Use Worksheet 6 to outline who will interpret results and how, and to map plans for reviewing analysis and interpretation with users.*



"Remember, the lenses you use to view and interpret your data can influence the way you view the outcome of your program. It's important to look back at the original purpose of the evaluation, and your key evaluation questions, when you determine what the data means for your program."

## TRY THIS:

*The BetterEvaluation.org website has an extensive overview of various data collection methods, tasks, analysis approaches and techniques and tips for visualization. Use it for inspiration and more detailed guidance (see: https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/rainbow_framework/describe/analyse_data).*

### Tips to Ensure Your Data (and Participants' Private Information) are Safe

- At a minimum, protect all electronic data collection and storage devices with a strong passphrase. A passphrase should be at least 12 characters in length.
- Remove all direct identifiers of your participants as soon as possible. Access to identifiable data should be on a need-to-know basis.
- Store and/or transmit files on an approved platform. Encrypt files you share through email.
- Use accepted practices (such as aggregate reporting or pseudonyms) to protect against indirect identification.
- Ensure that research data, when destroyed, is done in a way that protects the participants.
- Keep hard copies of items containing any identifiable information secure with limited access. These items may include, but are not limited to, consent forms, payment forms, data forms, keys/codes for data, and some types of questionnaires.
- Store hard copies of identifiable information in locked file cabinets, offices, or storage facilities.
- Shred hard copies of data when appropriate (usually three years after the end-date of research).

### Terms to Know

**Data sovereignty:** the idea that data are subject to the laws of the nations and/or people where they are collected. Data sovereignty is of particular importance when engaging with Indigenous participants.

**Methods**: ways of collecting and analyzing data.

**Quantitative methods**: focus on numerical/statistical information.

**Qualitative methods**: focus on narrative information.

**Mixed methods**: combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

**Triangulation**: use of multiple data sources and methods to better understand findings and increase the strength of evidence.

CHAPTER FIVE

# Using and Sharing Your Data

## In this chapter

Now that you've planned for, collected and analyzed all your data, it's time to share it. Sharing your findings with the right people is the very best way to make sure they're useful. This is the last step in the evaluation process: shaping the story you want to tell and getting the message out.

## Evaluation report: How to share your findings

A good evaluation report fully captures your learnings, includes different points of view, and describes your methodology, limitations and findings in detail. This is the most important deliverable in the evaluation process and can occur in multiple ways, including:

- In writing: such as reports, infographics, blogs, or social media posts.
- Verbally: often at meetings or through storytelling, presentations, or videos.

## Key elements of a report

- Executive summary: Provide an overview of the report, including highlights and key "take-aways."
- Explanation of goals: Tell your reader the purpose for your evaluation and identify key stakeholder groups.
- Give context: Explain the program and its context, such as time, place, or important background information.
- Outline your process: Describe your evaluation design, questions, data collection and analysis methods, and sources of information
- Talk about the outcomes: Tell the reader about your results, any conclusions you have drawn, and the limitations you encountered
- Share your recommendations: This is optional, but you may have recommendations for program improvements or other actions that could be informed by your evaluation findings.

Keep in mind that your Final Report should include language and terms that your community uses (e.g., plain language explanations of jargon or acronyms), images that fairly represent your community, and culturally relevant visualization tools.

## Acknowledging limitations

Every evaluation has limitations, which can influence the interpretation of results or conclusions. These shortcomings are often outside the evaluator's control and usually involve:

- **Evaluation design**: maybe you lack a comparison group (a group of people not participating in your program whose results are compared to those of participants), which prevents you from attributing changes in participants to your program.

- **Methods**: there are advantages and disadvantages to every method, so make sure to acknowledge them.
- **Availability of data**: you might have gaps in records, or encounter difficulty gathering input from different perspectives like program participants, staff, and/or community members.
- **Small sample size**: if there's a low response to your survey, your results might represent a full range of perspectives.
- **Limited time**: time is a resource too, and you might not have enough for all the evaluation activities you want or to gather the data you need.

How do you handle limitations? Be open about them. Mention limitations in your evaluation report and how they might affect interpretation of your results. Keep them in mind for any future evaluation work — maybe you can minimize them next time.

## DO THIS: WORKSHEET 7

***Final Checklist for Ensuring Effective Evaluation Reports**: This checklist includes essential elements of a report as well as practical steps (for example, editing for jargon) that will help you create a comprehensive, clear evaluation report. You'll find this checklist at the very end of the toolkit.*

### Who should see my recommendations?

When creating your report, think about who you're sharing your recommendations with. Keep these stakeholders in mind and think about how best to share your findings with them. Then you can put the information together in a **communications plan**. Consider sharing your findings with stakeholders inside and outside your organization and program. Think about who is interested in your program, and who might be able to take action on your recommendations.

- Look at your original list of stakeholders
- Consider expanding the list to include people who want to know more about your program or the lessons you've learned
- Tailor the information you share to each type of stakeholder. Their involvement or interest will determine how you share your findings, how much detail you share and how technically complex you get.

### How to increase the likelihood your findings will be used

There are several practical steps you can include in your evaluation plan to help ensure your evaluation findings are used:

- Schedule meetings with evaluation users or staff members to discuss or review your evaluation findings.
- Ask users to identify ways they can apply the findings to improve their programs.
- Work with staff and partners on how to implement recommendations for improvement.
- Create several tailored reports for different audiences.

Don't eliminate poor or negative results: report them all. Make sure to include the limitations of your results so your audience can decide for themselves how to interpret your work.

## ASK THIS:

- *What does this user care about?*
- *What will this group want to know?*
- *What, if any, other information will resonate with them?*

## DO THIS: WORKSHEET 8

***Communications plan****: Use Worksheet 8 to determine which audiences you're trying to reach, your communication goals, and what and how you're going to tell them about your evaluation.*

### Pro Tips

*What if my results aren't great? Develop a Failures Report!*

There's a common misperception that failure is a bad thing — but it's actually something we can learn and move on from in a straightforward way. The secret to successful learning from failure is to create a culture that makes people feel safe in admitting or reporting failures. Strong leadership can build a learning culture — one that analyzes failures both large and small, and looks for opportunities to learn and experiment. While leaders might worry that embracing failure can lead to an environment where "anything goes," they should recognize that failure is unavoidable, and examining it can lead to innovation and improvement. Importantly, it can help others to build from your strengths.

### Terms to Know

**Audience:** intended users of evaluation results or products.

**Evaluation report:** overview of the evaluation process, findings, conclusions, and sometimes recommendations; often but not always a written document.

**Knowledge mobilization:** activities and products for sharing and using evaluation results — that is, moving knowledge into active use.

**Limitations:** shortcomings in the evaluation that may influence results or conclusions (every evaluation has them).

**Root cause:** The root cause is the core issue—the highest-level cause—that sets in motion the entire cause-and-effect reaction that ultimately leads to the problem(s).

**Systemic and structural barriers:** obstacles that collectively affect a group disproportionately and perpetuate or maintain stark disparities in outcomes. Structural barriers can be policies, practices, and other norms that favor an advantaged group while systematically disadvantaging a marginalized group.

**APPENDIX**

# Discover This: Online Resources to Help You on Your Journey

Every chapter of this guide includes a list of resources to help you on your evaluation journey. As you go through the worksheets and identify areas where you need more information, this appendix is here to help!

## CHAPTER 1: THE BASICS OF EVALUATION

***List of Credentialed Evaluators in Canada that can help you conduct an evaluation:***

*Evaluation Canada. (n.d.). Roster of credentialed evaluators. https://evaluationcanada.ca/roster-credentialed-evaluators*

***Resource guide sharing guidance on how to work with an internal evaluator or external contractor. Discusses pros and cons of using an internal vs external evaluation team to help inform your approach:***

*Franco Chappelle, E. (2011, January 11). CDC coffee break: How do I work with an internal evaluator or external evaluation contractor? [Slides]. CDC. https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/pubs/docs/cb_january_11_2011.pdf*

***List of coaches who specialize in developmental evaluation. This is handy if you have a complex program or are working with uncertain conditions:***

*Innoweave. (n.d.). Our coaches. https://innoweave.ca/coaching-streams/our-coaches/*

***A different framework for youth program evaluation. This toolkit has some really good resources to help you if you are feeling stuck!***

*YouthREX. (n.d.). Evaluation toolkit for youth programs. https://toolkit.youthrex.com/*

***A resource to help you plan and budget monitoring and evaluation activities:***

*Sedrakian, S. (2016, July). Financing monitoring & evaluation: A self-study toolkit. Ontario Council for International Cooperation. https://www.ocic.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Financing-Monitoring-and-Evaluation-Sample-Toolkit.pdf*

# CHAPTER 2: FOCUSING YOUR EVALUATION

***Questions and considerations to help clarify what's being evaluated:***

*Centre for family research and evaluation (n.d.) Evaluation step 1: Clarifying the request and what is being evaluated. https://cfre.org.au/evaluation-step-1-clarifying-the-request-and-what-is-being-evaluated/*

***Resources and checklists to help you understand your program using logic models:***

*Youth REX (n.d) Step 02: Understanding Your Program Using Logic Modeling. https://toolkit.youthrex.com/step02/*

***A short video explaining theories of change:***

*DIY Toolkit (2014 February) Theory Of Change Video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zRre_gB6A4*

***Guidelines for identifying the primary intended user(s) and the intended use(s) of an evaluation:***

*Patton, M.Q. (2012 February) Identifying the Intended User(s) and Use(s) of an Evaluation. https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/idrc.pdf*

***How to create user profile cards:***

*Here to There Consulting (2016 August) Developing a user profile aide for action. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jQeqNK6y9Xp6yW8J7kr0yaCkBF18dvJ5/view*

# CHAPTER 3: DESIGNING YOUR PLAN

***A checklist for writing and focusing evaluation questions:***

*CDC National Asthma Control Program. (2013). Good evaluation questions: A checklist to help focus your evaluation. CDC. https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/program_eval/assessingevaluationquestionchecklist.pdf*

***A comprehensive list of evaluation approaches (methods and processes):***

*Better Evaluation. (n.d.). Approaches. https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/approaches*

***Twenty-five core concepts you need to know about evaluation:***

*Patton, M. Q. (2017, March). Evaluation flash cards: Embedding evaluative thinking in organizational culture. Otto Bremer Trust. https://ottobremer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/OBT_flashcards_v2_2017.pdf*

***A checklist to help you write strong evaluation questions:***

*Wingate, L., Schroeter,D. (2016) Specify the Key Evaluation Questions. https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/eval-questions-wingate%26schroeter.pdf*

***Information on how to conduct evaluation through a culturally responsive and racial-equity lens:***

*Public Policy Associates, Incorporated. (2017, April). Considerations for conducting evaluation using a culturally responsive/racial equity lens. http://publicpolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/PPA-Culturally-Responsive-Lens.pdf*

# CHAPTER 4: COLLECTING, ORGANIZING, ANALYZING AND MAKING SENSE OF YOUR DATA

***This resource contains a summary of the most commonly used evaluation methods to help you collect data to answer your evaluation questions:***

*The Pell Institute and Pathways to College Network. (n.d.). Evaluation toolkit: Linking your research questions and data collection methods. http://toolkit.pellinstitute.org/evaluation-guide/collect-data/*

***This short guide walks you through how to analyze and interpret the data you have collected:***

*Center for Community Health and Evaluation. (n.d.). Cottage health evaluation toolkit: How to analyze and interpret data. Cottage Health. https://www.cottagehealth.org/app/files/public/50611cb2-a03d-419e-9b47-a0d75e707707/Analyze_and_Interpret_Data_Cottage_Health_Evaluation_Toolkit.pdf*

***This video helps you understand the principles of ownership, control, access and possession of data (OCAP), important considerations when working with data pertaining to First Nations groups:***

*The First Nations Information Governance Centre. (n.d.). The First Nations principles of OCAP. https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/*

***This resource covers data collection methods to help you answer your evaluation questions:***

*Better evaluation. (2018, February 28). Data Collection Methods. https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/guides/collect_retrieve_data/collection_methods*

# CHAPTER 5: USING AND SHARING YOUR DATA

***Strategies to learn from failure - fail like a pro (it's not a bad thing!):***

*Edmondson, A.C. (2011 April) Failure Analysis: expectations, design/strategy, implementation/execution? Blameworthy? Praiseworthy. https://hbr.org/2011/04/strategies-for-learning-from-failure*

***How to write a failure report:***

*Fail Forward (n.d.) How to write a failure report. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/583382786b8f5b1d0c788b9e/t/598c892049fc2bdf4785e06d/1502382369247/Fail+Forward+How+To+Write+a+Failure+Report.pdf*

***This toolkit helps you make evidence accessible, understandable and useful for knowledge users:***

*Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health. (n.d.). Knowledge mobilization toolkit: Doing more with what you know. http://www.kmbtoolkit.ca/*

***This checklist helps you develop your communications plan to share your results:***

*Center for Community Health and Evaluation. (n.d.-b). How to use and share your evaluation results. Cottage Health. https://www.cottagehealth.org/app/files/public/f6557dc9-8e10-4bbd-8c99-88a3cc7b68ff/Use_and_Share_Evaluation_Results_Cottage_Health_Evaluation_Toolkit.pdf*

Part Two:

# Companion Worksheets and Example Evaluation Plan

February 2023

Part Two includes a series of worksheets that will help you think through the concepts discussed in Part One and build your own evaluation plan. Consider them a framework and orienting compass that you can modify to suit your own needs. You will also find a step-by-step, real-world example that helps illustrate how to use the worksheet. It is based on a recent program with a youth climate organization.

The blank worksheets can be filled out on your computer and printed, or you can print them and fill them out by hand. You can also access the blank worksheets as a stand-alone document here: lawson.ca/evaluation-guide-worksheets.pdf.

Good luck and remember to check out the Discover This sections in the appendix for more support and resources.

# Companion Worksheets and Example: Table of Contents

# Worksheet 1: Is Your Program Evaluation-Ready?

There are several factors that come into play when you're considering who will do your evaluation. The following questions can help you decide whether to keep it in-house or hire an evaluation consultant.

| ASK YOURSELF | YES/NO | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|
| Are you or your organization required to do an evaluation by any internal or external agents or factors? | | |
| Does your program have clear goals, and a clear definition of success? | | |
| Can you gather data (or is it available) for the evaluation? | | |
| Does the program have the time, money, and resources to conduct an evaluation? | | |

# Worksheet 2: Create Your Logic Model and/or Theory of Change

Use the templates below to create a logic model and TOC for your project. Logic models and TOCs both show the connections and links between a program's resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes and depict how the program is expected to operate.

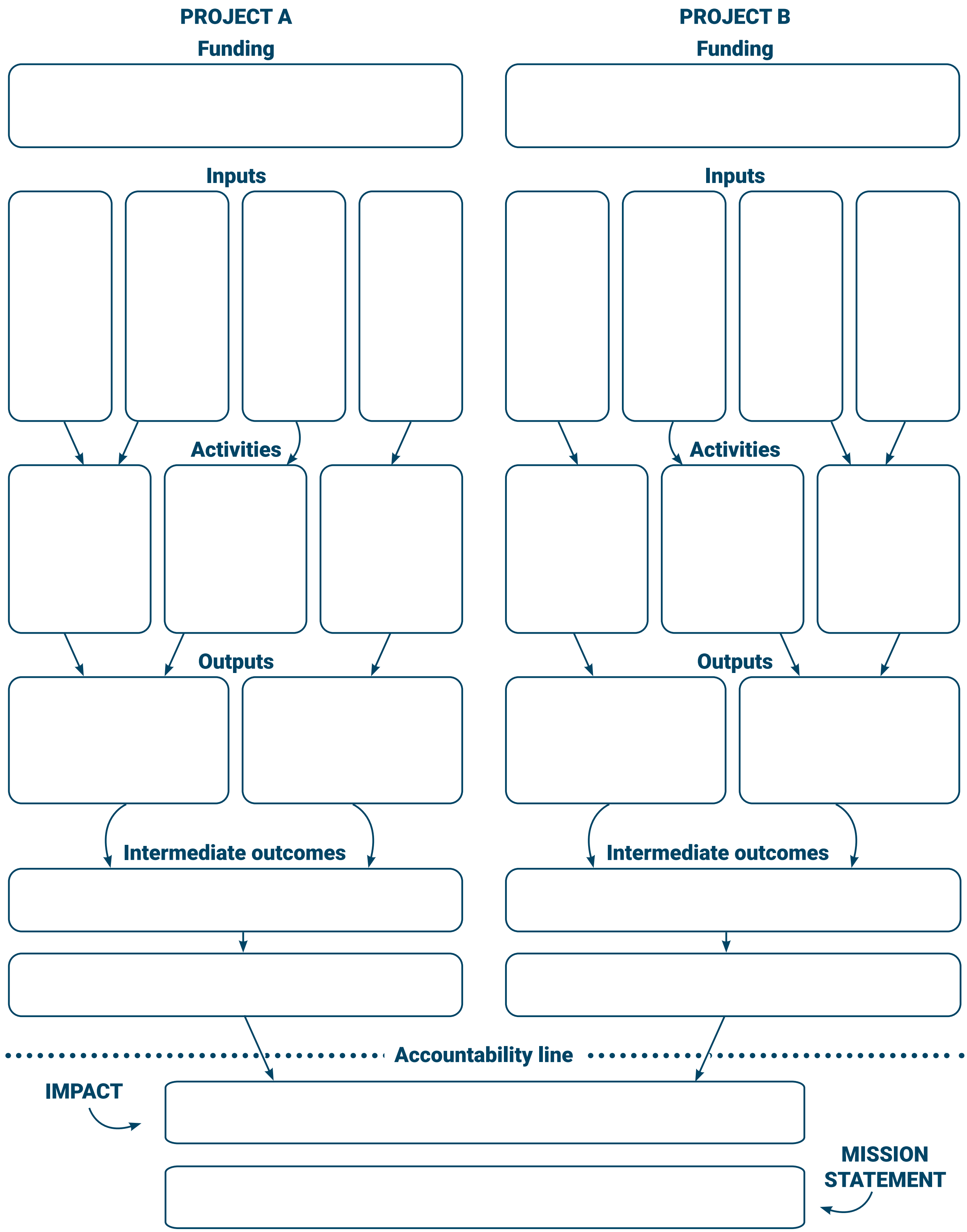
**Project purpose:** Fill out your project purpose in the space below.

| |
|---|
| |

**Logic Model template**

| | |
|---|---|
| **INPUTS**<br>The resources invested into a program or initiative. | |
| **AUDIENCE & ACTIVITIES**<br>Activities or interventions that will be carried out as part of the program. | |
| **INTERMEDIATE OUTPUTS**<br>Evidence the activities or interventions were performed. Outputs are typically quantifiable. | |
| **SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES**<br>Changes in participants' knowledge, beliefs, and behavior due to their involvement. | |
| **LONG-TERM IMPACTS**<br>The expected results and a program's lasting influences. | |

**Theory of Change template**



# Worksheet 3: Primary User Profile + Interview Guide

This worksheet will help guide your interviews with primary users. Remember to capture all their information (name, organization, and role). You can use this information when you design your evaluation, scope of work, and evaluation instruments.

| **PRIMARY USER** | **QUESTIONS**<br>What are your evaluation questions? | **USE**<br>What kinds of decisions will you make with the answers to these questions? | **PREFERENCES**<br>What are your preferences for you how we design the evaluation or communicate its findings? | **WINDOWS**<br>When do you need the evaluation findings? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Adapted from Cabaj, M. (n.d) Developing a User Profile. See https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jQeqNK6y9Xp6yW8J7kr0yaCkBF18dvJ5/view

## Worksheet 3, continued

Using the guiding information and questions in the table above, consider the different possible purposes of your evaluation. This will help you focus your questions, the method of your evaluation, and the different factors affecting how you can use your evaluation. Based on the questions you have formulated and referring to the evaluation type table on pp.18–19, state which evaluation type (Developmental, Formative, Summative, Accountability, Monitoring or Knowledge Generation) is most appropriate for you at this moment in time.

**Evaluation type:** ______________________________________________

**Comments:**

| |
|---|
| |

*Adapted from Cabaj, M. (n.d) Developing a User Profile. See https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jQeqNK6y9Xp6yW8J7kr0yaCkBF18dvJ5/view*

# Worksheet 4: Prioritize and Eliminate Key Evaluation Questions

In worksheet 3, you defined your primary user's questions. Now, take those questions and fill out the sheet below to determine how you can answer them, your timelines and priorities.

| QUESTION | WHICH STAKEHOLDERS? | IMPORTANCE TO STAKEHOLDERS | RELEVANT TO EVALUATION TYPE? (Y/N) | PRIORITY (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW, OR ELIMINATE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

# Worksheet 5: Fitting the Method to the Key Evaluation Question(s) + Creating a Data Collection Plan

When you choose your methods, you need to think about how they'll match your evaluation questions. A mismatch between evaluation questions and methods can mean your information is incomplete or even inaccurate. To give you lots of room to work, we recommend printing multiple copies of this page and filling out a separate table for each KEQ.

**KEQ**: ______________________________________________

| | |
|---|---|
| **Indicator***<br><br>*What information do you need to answer your evaluation questions (think, how do I break down my KEQ even further?)*<br><br>**Indicators need to be specific and measurable.* | |
| **Data source**<br><br>*Who do I need to talk to to get answers to my indicator questions?* | |
| **Data collection methods**<br><br>*What quantitative or qualitative methods are appropriate to use to collect this information?* | |
| Identify possible **barriers to data collection** | |
| What **Resources** are required to collect this data? | |
| **Who** is responsible for collecting this data? | |
| **Timeline for gathering data** | |
| **Cost considerations** | |

*Adapted from Switchboard TA. (2017, February 27). Data collection planning worksheet. Switchboard. https://switchboardta.org/resource/data-collection-planning-worksheet*

# Worksheet 6: Analysis and Interpretation Plan

This worksheet outlines who will interpret results, and how, and includes plans for reviewing analysis and interpretation with users to increase transparency and validity of your process and conclusions.

| INTERPRETATION AND REVIEW ACTIVITIES | ESTIMATED TIMELINE | WHO? |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
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| | | |

# Worksheet 7: Final Checklist for Ensuring Effective Evaluation Reports

This checklist will guide you in building your evaluation report. Follow the guide to build a report that includes all the information your audience will need. You've put so much hard work into the steps leading up to this, you'll want to do it justice. The checklist includes essential elements of a report as well as practical steps (for example, editing for jargon) that will help you create a comprehensive, clear evaluation report.

- [ ] Provide interim and final reports to intended users in time for use.
- [ ] Tailor the report content, format, and style for the audiences by involving primary users upfront and along the way.
- [ ] Include an executive summary.
- [ ] Summarize the description of the primary users and how they were engaged.
- [ ] Describe essential features of the program (e.g., logic model or theory of change as an appendices).
- [ ] Explain the focus of the evaluation and its limitations.
- [ ] Include an adequate summary of the evaluation plan and procedures.
- [ ] Provide all necessary technical information (e.g., in appendices).
- [ ] Specify the standards and criteria for evaluative judgments.
- [ ] Explain the evaluative judgments and how they are supported by the evidence.
- [ ] List both strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation.
- [ ] Discuss recommendations for action with their advantages, disadvantages, and resource implications.
- [ ] Ensure protections for program participants and others.
- [ ] Anticipate how people or organizations might be affected by the findings.
- [ ] Present minority opinions where necessary.
- [ ] Verify that the report is accurate and unbiased.
- [ ] Organize the report logically and include appropriate details.
- [ ] Remove technical jargon.
- [ ] Use examples, illustrations, graphics, and stories.

*Adapted from National Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2011). Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/CDC-Evaluation-Workbook-508.pdf*

# Worksheet 8: How to Share your Findings

This worksheet can help you determine which audiences you're trying to reach, your communication goals, and what and how you're going to tell audiences about your evaluation. It also helps you determine which tactics will be most effective, and who on your team is responsible for communicating with your audience.

| **WHO IS YOUR STAKEHOLDER?** (Primary and secondary users) | **WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU NEED TO SHARE WITH THEM?** (Review your primary user worksheet) | **WHY IS THIS INFORMATION RELEVANT?** | **HOW WILL YOU SHARE YOUR INFORMATION?** | **WHEN WILL YOU SHARE WITH THEM?** | **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR COMMUNICATING WITH THIS STAKEHOLDER?** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |
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# Case Study: Youth Climate Program

## Case Study Context:

Jasmine, a young climate leader, has received funding to run educational workshops with high school students in her community to teach them about Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 — Climate action focused on local change. Students will learn about the SDG's and create an action plan to develop a community project.

# Worksheet 1: Is Your Program Evaluation-Ready? (Case Study)

*Jasmine has just piloted her first set of five workshops and thinks the pilot was successful enough to expand the program. She will use this worksheet to determine whether an evaluation is needed now that she has reached the end of her pilot. This worksheet will help point out what variables she is working with and whether her program is ready for an evaluation.*

| ASK YOURSELF | YES/NO | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|
| Are you or your organization required to do an evaluation by any internal or external agents or factors? | Yes | Jasmine's organization wants to know if they should expand the program offerings and what they will need in order to scale. Her funders also want an update on how the pilot went. |
| Does your program have clear goals, and a clear definition of success? | Yes | As per her funding requirements, Jasmine had to conduct five workshops in her community to teach high school youth about Goal 13 of the Sustainable Development Goals and create action plans. |
| Can you gather data (or is it available) for the evaluation? | Yes | Jasmine conducted post-workshop surveys and has the contact information for workshop participants. |
| Does the program have the time, money, and resources to conduct an evaluation? | Yes | Jasmine has limited funds and resources to conduct an evaluation. |

# Worksheet 2: Create Your Logic Model and/or Theory of Change (Case Study)

*Jasmine has an existing logic model that she used to inform the design of her pilot program. Because the nature of her program is relatively straightforward, a Logic Model is better suited to describe her program.*

**Project purpose:** Fill out your project purpose in the space below.

| |
|---|
| Youth Climate Organization has received funding to pilot a workshop series to educate and mobilize youth on Sustainable Development Goal 13. Workshop participants will gain an understanding of the purpose of the sustainable development goals, and discussion will center around SDG 13. Participants will identify and list local climate actions, and create a plan to implement these actions in the community. |

**Logic Model template**

| | |
|---|---|
| **INPUTS**<br>The resources invested into a program or initiative. | Staff - Jasmine as program coordinator<br>Funding- $5,000 federal grant<br>Time - Jasmine has three months to host an additional five workshops<br>Materials - printed worksheets, pens, sticky notes, computer |
| **AUDIENCE & ACTIVITIES**<br>Activities or interventions that will be carried out as part of the program. | Primary audience: High school students<br>Secondary audience: Teachers<br>● Advertise the program to teachers<br>● Recruit five classes from local high schools<br>● Host workshops with students<br>● Administer and collect post-workshop survey |
| **INTERMEDIATE OUTPUTS**<br>Evidence the activities or interventions were performed. Outputs are typically quantifiable. | Students develop action plans that are specific to advancing climate actions in alignment with SDG goal 13 and that are relevant to their communities. |
| **SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES**<br>Changes in participants' knowledge, beliefs, and behavior due to their involvement. | ● Students use their action plans to create new projects<br>● Teachers will share Jasmine's program with others and invite more people to participate |
| **LONG-TERM IMPACTS**<br>The expected results and a program's lasting influences. | There is increased support for climate action at the community level. |

# Worksheet 3: Primary User Profile + Interview Guide (Case Study)

| **WHO: PRIMARY EVALUATION USER** | **QUESTIONS** What are their key evaluation questions? | **USE** What kinds of decisions will you make with the answers to these questions? | **PRIORITY** Rank the importance of this question (High, medium, low, eliminate) | **PREFERENCES** How does the primary user prefer to receive this information? | **WINDOWS** When do you need the evaluation findings? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Executive director | How can we improve the design of the program? | Inform capacity for expansion | High | ED likes testimonials and info presented as a summary slide deck | Staff retreat at end of Q3 |
| Program staff | What elements of the workshop were relevant and useful in guiding youth learning through the program? | Update/ improve workshop content | High | In a summary slide deck | Staff retreat at end of Q3 |
| Program staff | Does the program meet its goals? | Inform decision to expand program | High | At staff call | End of the pilot |
| Program staff | Is the program ready to expand? | Inform decision to expand | High | In summary slide deck | Staff retreat at end of Q3 |
| Program staff | What's working and what isn't? | Inform program planning and delivery | High | Summary slide deck | Staff retreat at end of Q3 |

Adapted from Cabaj, M. (n.d) Developing a User Profile. See https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jQeqNK6y9Xp6yW8J7kr0yaCkBF18dvJ5/view

# Worksheet 3: Primary User Profile + Interview Guide (Case Study)

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Program staff | What works for whom, when, and why? | Inform program planning and delivery | High | Summary slide deck | Staff retreat end of Q3 |
| Funders | What impact did this program have? | Make a case for support to apply for more funding | Medium | Visual graphics, report format following grant reporting guidelines | End of Q4 |
| Funders | Does the program produce outputs being produced the way you anticipated? | Inform program planning and delivery | Low | Visual graphics, report format following grant reporting guidelines | End of Q4 |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Adapted from Cabaj, M. (n.d) Developing a User Profile. See https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jQeqNK6y9Xp6yW8J7kr0yaCkBF18dvJ5/view

## Worksheet 3, continued

Using the guiding information and questions in the table above, consider the different possible purposes of your evaluation. This will help you focus your questions, the method of your evaluation, and the different factors affecting how you can use your evaluation. Based on the questions you have formulated and referring to the evaluation type table on pp. 18–19, state which evaluation type (Developmental, Formative, Summative, Accountability, Monitoring or Knowledge Generation) is most appropriate for you at this moment in time.

**Evaluation type:** **Formative**

**Comments:**

*Jasmine has just piloted her first set of five workshops and thinks the pilot was successful enough to expand the program. She is at a point where she needs to evaluate the success of her pilot, and get informed on how to improve the design and the delivery of the program for the next stage. Because of these needs, a formative evaluation is most appropriate.*

# Worksheet 4: Prioritize and Eliminate Key Evaluation Questions (Case Study)

In worksheet 3, you defined your primary user's questions. Now, take those questions and fill out the sheet below to determine how you can answer them, your timelines and priorities..

| QUESTION | WHICH STAKEHOLDERS? | IMPORTANCE TO STAKEHOLDERS | RELEVANT TO EVALUATION TYPE? | PRIORITY (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW, OR ELIMINATE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| What's working and what isn't? | Program staff | High | Yes | High |
| What are the program's strengths and weaknesses? | Program staff | High | Yes | High |
| Is the program ready to expand? | Program staff | High | Yes | High |
| What impact did this program have? | Funders | High | No | Eliminate |
| What works for whom, when, and why? | Program staff | High | Yes | High |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

# Worksheet 5: Fitting the Method to the Key Evaluation Question(s) + Creating a Data Collection Plan (Case Study)

When you choose your methods, you need to think about how they'll match your evaluation questions. A mismatch between evaluation questions and methods can mean your information is incomplete or even inaccurate. To give you lots of room to work, we recommend printing multiple copies of this page and filling out a separate table for each KEQ.

**KEQ**: How can we improve the design of the program?

| | |
|---|---|
| **Indicator*** <br><br> *What information do you need to answer your evaluation questions (think, how do I break down my KEQ even further?)* <br><br> **Indicators need to be specific and measurable.* | What elements of the workshop did participants find useful? <br><br> How satisfied were participants with each workshop activities? <br><br> What would participants like to see done differently? |
| **Data source** <br><br> *Who do I need to talk to to get answers to my indicator questions?* | Workshop participants |
| **Data collection methods** <br><br> *What quantitative or qualitative methods are appropriate to use to collect this information?* | Surveys and informal interviews |
| Identify possible **barriers to data collection** | Some participants may not have access to the internet to fill out a survey or participate in a zoom call |
| What **Resources** are required to collect this data? | A survey platform such as survey monkey or google forms. <br><br> A video platform such as Zoom to conduct online interviews. |
| **Who** is responsible for collecting this data? | Jasmine is responsible for designing and administering the survey and following up with participants to collect testimonials |
| **Timeline for gathering data** | Design due October 15 <br><br> Survey and interviews happening Nov 1-15 |
| **Cost considerations** | A $25 giftcard to incentivize survey responses from participants |

# Worksheet 6: Analysis and Interpretation Plan (Case Study)

This worksheet outlines who will interpret results, and how, and includes plans for reviewing analysis and interpretation with users to increase transparency and validity of your process and conclusions.

| INTERPRETATION AND REVIEW ACTIVITIES | ESTIMATED TIMELINE | WHO? |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Primary user interpretation meeting | Immediately following preparation of preliminary results | Primary users |
| Internal management review of draft final report | Within three months following the preparation of preliminary results | Jasmine, program director(s), executive director |
| Review process of final report | Within two months following stakeholder review of draft final report | Jasmine, executive director |
| | | |
| | | |

# Worksheet 8: How to Share your Findings (Case Study)

This worksheet can help you determine which audiences you're trying to reach, your communication goals, and what and how you're going to tell audiences about your evaluation. It also helps you determine which tactics will be most effective, and who on your team is responsible for communicating with your audience.

| **WHO IS YOUR STAKEHOLDER?** (Primary and secondary users) | **WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU NEED TO SHARE WITH THEM?** (Review your primary user worksheet) | **WHY IS THIS INFORMATION RELEVANT?** | **HOW WILL YOU SHARE YOUR INFORMATION?** | **WHEN WILL YOU SHARE WITH THEM?** | **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR COMMUNICATING WITH THIS STAKEHOLDER?** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Funder | A one page report that shows how your pilot made a difference in the community with a budget breakdown. | This helps build open and honest communication with the funder, and could help build a case for support to receive more funding from them in the future. | Impact report | At the end of the Q4 when reporting is due. | Executive director |
| Internal organization staff | Evaluation summary<br><br>Reflection of what was learned from the pilot | This helps us identify our strengths as well as gaps in programming and informs the direction of program expansion | Summary slide deck | At the end of Q3 at the staff retreat | Jasmine, the program manager |
| High School Teachers | Updated program description<br><br>Testimonials from students who participated in the workshop | Sharing testimonials can help promote the program and recruit more students in the next phase | In a brochure with program information | During program recruitment in Q1 year 2 | Jasmine, the program manager |
| Partner organizations | Updated program description with testimonials from students who participated in the workshop | Partner organizations can help spread the word about your program and use your findings to inform their own programming | In monthly newsletter, informal conversations at network events or in communities of practice | Include segment newsletter Q1 year 2 | Communications manager |