

## PLANNING EVALUATION: SUMMARY OF COMMON EVALUATION METHODS

Tool	Description	Usefulness	Disadvantages
<b>Interviews</b>	These can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. They involve asking specific questions to participants, and recording their responses for analysis. Questions can be open-ended or closed (yes/no answers), and can be a source of both qualitative and quantitative information.	They can be used with almost anyone who has some involvement with the project. They can be done in person, or conducted over the telephone.	They require specific skills in interviewing.
<b>Key informant interviews</b>	These are interviews that are carried out with specialists in a particular topic or someone who may be able to shed a particular light on the process.	Participants offer useful insights and can contribute to the “big picture”.	They need a skilled interviewer with a good understanding of the topic.
<b>Questionnaires</b>	These are written questions that are used to get written responses which, when analyzed, will enable indicators to be measured. Ideally, these questionnaires are standardized tools with good psychometric properties.	This tool can help gain information from a large number of people, and can save a lot of time if participants can complete it on their own. A questionnaire also affords more anonymity than an interview so respondents may feel more comfortable in saying things they may not say to an interviewer.	Questionnaires can be problematic for those whose first language is not English or French, or for those who may be illiterate. This requires someone to assist in completion of the questionnaire resulting in greater time commitment. Questionnaires must also be piloted or tested to ensure questions can be understood.

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<b>Focus Groups</b>	In a focus group, approximately 6 to 8 people are interviewed together by a skilled facilitator with an open-ended set of questions, focused around a specific topic or issue.	This can be a useful way of gathering indepth opinions on a particular topic from a number of people at one time.	As with all qualitative methods, findings cannot be generalized to the broader population. During the group, some people can influence the responses of others. Ideally, focus groups are recorded and transcribed, requiring special equipment and a considerable investment of time.
<b>Community meetings</b>	This involves a gathering of a large group of beneficiaries from whom input is sought regarding broad issues, problems, or situations.	Community meetings are useful for getting a broad response from many people on specific issues. It is also a good way of involving beneficiaries directly in an evaluation process, giving them a sense of ownership of the process. These meetings are useful to have at critical points in the project.	Community meetings can be difficult to facilitate, and so require a skilled facilitator.
<b>Rating scales</b>	This makes use of a continuum along which respondents are asked to indicate their attitudes, feelings, etc. For example, in response to a statement, people are asked whether they agree, strongly agree, don't know, disagree, or strongly disagree. Pictures or symbols can be used to enhance understanding.	It is useful to measure attitudes, opinions, or perceptions.	You need to test the statements very carefully to ensure there is no possibility of misunderstanding.

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<b>Participant Observation</b>	This involves direct observation of events, processes, relationships, and behaviours. 'Participant' implies that the observer is involved with the activities rather than maintaining a distance.	It is a useful way of Understanding behaviour in its' natural setting. It may reveal conditions, problems, or patterns that informants may not be aware of or be able to describe adequately. Observation also allows for gathering a large amount of data within a relatively short period of time.	It is difficult to observe and participate. The process of analyzing the data requires skills, training, and is very time consuming.
<b>File Review</b>	This involves conducting a systematic review of documents, e.g., general program files or files on individual projects, clients, or participants, using a checklist of items that is developed in advance.	A review of files can provide invaluable background information and information on the program and its environment. A file review is also feasible and economical	Program files can sometimes be incomplete, and there may not be a central repository for these files.
<b>Self-drawings</b>	This involves getting participants to draw pictures, usually of how they feel or think about something.	This can be a very useful way of collecting data from younger children.	Interpreting drawings can be difficult and highly subjective.

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