



Evaluation on a shoestring – structuring a basic evaluation for maximum results with minimum resources

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Why evaluate?

Measuring efficiency

Assess the impact of an initiative on the target group(s)

Establish which elements have been most effective

Identify sub-groups for whom efficiency is highest

Highlight areas where efficiency could be improved

Beyond the intervention

Evaluation assists in justifying further funding for project continuation and development



It informs future projects – an evaluation will give as many new questions as answers

Importance of continuous evaluation

Provides flexibility to make alterations during a project, and thereby improve final outcomes



Allows identification of “lessons learned” as an outcome to inform the next version of the initiative (and future projects)

The role of previous evaluations

Guides project planning by highlighting approaches and areas to explore – a great “heads-up”

Informs on lessons learned by others – avoid same pitfalls

Helps justify the chosen approach when bidding for funding

Provides guidance on evaluation strategies



Key steps in evaluation

Establish the baseline

- Demographics
- Attitude & behaviour
- Skills & knowledge



Beyond the baseline

- Attitude & behaviour (t1 & t2 comparisons)
- Skills & knowledge (t1 & t2 comparisons)
- General feedback – can steer improvements to participant engagement

Post-intervention

- Attitude & behaviour (t1, t2, t3 comparisons)
- Skills & knowledge (t1, t2, t3 comparisons)
- Happy sheets



Residual effects – 3 month/6 month/12 month

- Attitude & behaviour (t1, t2, t3, t4 comparisons)
- Skills & knowledge (t1, t2, t3, t4 comparisons)
- “Hard” data (STATS19, convictions, etc.)

The evaluation toolkit

Questionnaires

Can be very efficient for data collection and analysis – particularly quantitative data

Existing questionnaires can be adapted to meet your needs



If creating from scratch, think about how you are going to process and use the data, and design the questions accordingly

- Categorical (yes/no, grouped options)
- Scale (1-5, strongly disagree-strongly agree)
- Free-text



Quantitative data can be statistically analysed efficiently – large quantities do not affect length of analysis

Interviews and focus groups

Labour intensive but provide rich, qualitative data

One-to-one interviews are time consuming but allow rapport development

Focus groups are time-efficient but peer pressure and group dynamics can affect the quality of data gathered

Analysis can take a long time – audio recordings must be scrutinised in full for most commonly occurring themes, and good supporting quotes extracted to evidence them

Assessments

Skills, knowledge or attitudinal/behavioural assessments could be used pre and post intervention

Must provide objective or at least comparable data, e.g.

- Computer-based hazard perception test scores
- Driving assessments carried out by the same assessor pre and post

Data must be in a usable form suitable for comparative analysis – numerical or otherwise quantifiable (e.g. a grading system), or use standardised descriptions

Objective measures

In some cases other objective data is available

- KSI data
- Offending rates
- Insurance claim data
- IVDR (black box) data

This is very useful in triangulating data from subjective sources

Planning your evaluation

Work from the end to the beginning

What do you ultimately want to find out?

What sort of information will help you to do that?

What sort of data do you need to gather to do the analysis?

Who is going to actually collect the data?

What tools do you need to gather the data?

How are you going to recruit the participants?



Avoid:

Taking too much of a broad-brush approach and failing to evaluate any element effectively



Setting out to “prove” something works – a good evaluation is an investigative process, not a pass/fail assessment

Advice

Be realistic about the amount of data that you will be able to collect – it's harder than it sounds

Make sure that your evaluation participants are representative of your overall target group

Ask the right questions, ask the right people – if you have a very diverse group, you may need to gather different data from sub-groups

Review previous evaluations of similar interventions, for:

- Ideas for the best approach to your intervention
- Useful advice on positives and pitfalls
- Outline evaluation structures you can use as a template
- Resources you can use for your own planning and evaluation

If you're not confident, get some advice from a professional researcher





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