



Canadian International
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de
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How to Perform Evaluations -

Information Collection and Analysis

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HOW TO PERFORM EVALUATIONS

INFORMATION COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

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PERFORMANCE REVIEW BRANCH

About this Series...

Evaluations are a key contributor to CIDA's performance measurement and reporting system.

These guides describe the Agency's expectations for delivery to help ensure effective, consistent work practices.

Bringing a Focus to...

- 1 Getting Started
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Developing credible, useful results

At this point, CIDA and the evaluator have reached agreement on the evaluation workplan, establishing a clear and mutual understanding of how the evaluation is to be carried out and what is to be achieved. Now the challenge becomes gathering the additional information needed to meet expectations for delivery.

Generally, this starts with a mission to the host recipient country/countries to:

- ❖ Brief strategic audiences
- ❖ Consult with the intended beneficiaries, other stakeholders and the individuals responsible for program/project delivery, and
- ❖ Conduct surveys, group focus sessions, site visits, etc.

The information collected is then analyzed and distilled into credible, reliable and useful results for presentation in the evaluation report. The findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned put forward will allow others to reflect on what was learned from the evaluation and what changes are being recommended.

This Guide offers evaluators a strategic orientation to information collection and analysis to facilitate informed decision-making. We focus on optimizing value-added, while respecting the realities of what can be achieved.

This Guide serves as a companion piece to CIDA's Evaluation Guide

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CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

WORKING FROM THE WORKPLAN

Guiding information collection
and analysis activities

Valuable Reference

- ❖ Key management plan
- ❖ Operationalizes the evaluation
- ❖ Guides performance to meet expectations
- ❖ Targets results
- ❖ Designs approach
- ❖ Describes methodology

Key features:

- ☑ Determines who is going to be responsible and/or accountable for what
- ☑ Identifies the questions to be answered by the evaluation
- ☑ Selects the performance indicators to be used for measuring progress towards the attainment of results
- ☑ Sets out the information sources that are considered to be most relevant, practical to evaluation delivery, and conducive to the development of results
- ☑ Describes the information collection processes and the information analysis techniques to be applied
- ☑ Addresses what role stakeholders are to play and how they will participate during the field mission
- ☑ Establishes a requirement for progress reporting and information sharing
- ☑ Specifies a work schedule, with target dates for key milestones

The evaluation workplan links information collection/analysis with CIDA's "Framework of Results and Key Success Factors" to maintain a focus on what constitutes achievement in the eyes of the Agency

THINKING AHEAD

Building for Success

The following ideas may help you to visualize what you are getting into, and establish some basic values for keeping the evaluation focused on what is to be accomplished:

Enduring Value

The enduring value of your evaluation will rest primarily with how the results are shared and then used to advantage. Fertile opportunities for sharing what you have learned should be fully exploited during information collection missions and later through evaluation reporting. Throughout, your thinking should be consistently channelled towards the development of useful, credible results for presentation in the evaluation report.

Stakeholder Participation

Early on, the evaluator should develop a strategy that sets out how key stakeholders are to be consulted during the site visit. The mapping of stakeholders may help to ensure adequate coverage and representation.

Being Selective

Simply put, not every tidbit of information needs to be collected to know what is going on. It is important to be selective in order to achieve optimal value, while remaining cost-effective.

Progressive Learning

Be ready to learn from the information being collected. Options may surface for delivering better results. Your mind-set should be receptive to intuitive, midstream decision-making that exploits potentially rewarding opportunities.

Informed Reporting

Structure your reporting regimen so that CIDA management gets factual and balanced reporting from the field. The Agency's interests are only served when evaluators provide a complete and accurate picture of what is really happening. Often, only "good news" is received, while developing issues and problems are ignored. This approach can prove costly.

PRE-MISSION CHECKLIST

Last chance to cover the bases

- Has CIDA's evaluation manager consulted with the desk officer and post personnel to address protocol requirements in the recipient country/countries?
- Has the post been provided with your itinerary and other important documentation (e.g. evaluation workplan)?
- Is mission planning completed? Have the travel logistics been worked out to your satisfaction?
- Are your travel documents complete? Do you have the necessary medical/health clearances and/or treatments?
- Are the information collection opportunities adequate for meeting CIDA's expectations of the evaluation? Will information collection be affordable? Is the work schedule still doable? Are any revisions needed?
- Is your strategy for stakeholder participation adequate in the Agency's estimation?
- Are you ready to brief key personnel on arrival?
- Should anything further be discussed with CIDA's evaluation manager before departing?

INFORMATION COLLECTION OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity	Description
<u>Document review</u>	<p>Examining program/project, client and participant files to develop historical perspective and familiarization with viewpoints, issues and developments.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Program materials, contracts/contribution agreements, ongoing monitoring reports, correspondence, annual reports, evaluations, audits, operational reviews, Internet, etc.</p>
<u>Literature searches</u>	<p>Researching reports, studies, published papers and books, etc.</p>
<u>Key informant interviews</u>	<p>In-depth interviews with knowledgeable and experienced individuals. Good source for qualitative information.</p> <p><u>Interviewees:</u> Key contacts with national/community-based organizations/NGOs, program/project staff, ad hoc committee members, recipient government representatives, etc.</p>
<u>Surveys and focus groups</u>	<p>Surveys provide quantitative and qualitative responses from respondents. Focus groups concentrate information collection on selected issues/topics.</p> <p><u>Participants:</u> Key stakeholders (intended beneficiaries), partners in delivery, local populations, researchers/practitioners, etc.</p>
<u>Site observations</u>	<p>Visits provide opportunities for witnessing results and developments first-hand .</p>
<u>Data analysis</u>	<p>Benefiting from data (and analyses) prepared by authoritative organizations in the sector/field.</p>
<u>Expert panels, peer reviews</u>	<p>Using the perspective and knowledge of experts to discuss results and assess evaluation issues.</p>
<u>Case studies</u>	<p>Used if investment is comprised of a series of projects. A sample of case studies is then selected to assess results.</p>

TIPS FOR THE FIELD

Stay informed, build on what works
and celebrate what you achieve.

Be Sensitive and Aware

Understand the context that you are functioning in and always remain cognizant of the dynamics at play (and responsive to their implications). The local economic, social, political and cultural characteristics of the recipient country can be critical in determining what can be accomplished.

Good work practices demonstrate cultural sensitivity and make accommodations for local beliefs and customs.

Demonstrate Leadership

Evaluations are intrusive, placing additional demands on individuals and disrupting day-to-day operations. Keep things simple and minimize the burden.

Reluctance to participate and antagonism in the field is best countered by:

- Emphasizing constructive elements
- Keeping participants involved and fully informed through regular meetings, and
- Maintaining open and frank communications with local stakeholders, CEAs and the post.

Focus on Results

Leadership is key in keeping stakeholders/ partners working towards what you are trying to accomplish. Frequent indications of progress are important for motivating the participants, and keeping CIDA management informed.

Deal with emerging issues promptly and don't allow interpersonal conflicts to dominate the agenda. Sidestep any such distractions. A focused team effort is critical for success.

Address any misunderstandings or misinterpretations quickly before they can cause larger problems.

Ethics and Values

Unless, ethical standards are respected, the credibility of your evaluation may be jeopardized. Competency in delivery, integrity in relationships and accountability in performance are key.

You may run into conflicts with partners in developing countries due to fundamental differences in values (e.g. deprivation of minority rights). Your response should negotiate the delicate balance between sensitivity to local practices and respect for international conventions.

Disciplined yet Adaptable

The evaluation workplan is your prescription for meeting the expectations of CIDA management. It offers a path for answering the evaluation questions that needs to be respected and adhered to in bringing the evaluation to a successful conclusion.

Yet the realities of fieldwork often embody elements that can ambush the best laid plans. Being adaptive, creative and innovative in overcoming such hurdles will help keep the evaluation on track.

New ideas may come to light during the field mission that could improve the persuasiveness of your results. Their value should not be lost.

In all cases, new approaches should be discussed with CIDA's evaluation manager before they are implemented.

Information Problems

Your leadership and interpersonal skills may be called upon to deal with:

- Denials about the existence of information
- The absence of good information for answering questions
- Deficiencies in the volume or quality of information
- Questionable validity/reliability
- Contradictory information
- Sensitive information that is difficult to report, and
- Any evidence of wrongdoing.

Working through Difficulties

Often, evaluators are faced with unanticipated challenges during field work.

In some cases, difficulties can be resolved by simply applying fundamental values and ethics, and/or proven management practices.

Issues, however, can be more complex with unique dimensions demanding unique solutions. The art of negotiation can be a valuable asset when working in developing countries. Often, consensus building and compromise may offer the only pragmatic recourse for placating local partners without threatening the evaluation.

Snap, unilateral decisions usually are not the answer. Working through difficulties to reach the appropriate solution usually involves consulting with partners/stakeholders to discuss what should be done.

DEVELOPING RESULTS

Building enduring value

The next step is to focus on the evaluation questions, distil what you have learned and develop accurate, credible and useful results that measure what has been achieved relative to what was expected to be achieved by the investment. Analytical techniques can include: 1) statistical analysis, 2) non-statistical analysis, 3) projecting longer-term outcomes/impacts using direct results, 4) modelling, and 5) cost benefit and cost effectiveness analyses.

When formulating your findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned, it is important to take the broadest view of the value offered by the information collected. Every effort should be made to reduce bias, error and misinterpretation in developing your results. Double check contradictory evidence, give more weight to reliable sources, and ensure significant information is not ignored. Credible results are derived from multiple information sources and are directly tied to the subject investment, thereby eliminating other explanations.

Ideally, the information that you have collected and analyzed will result in recommendations being implemented as appropriate, and key audiences sharing in and benefiting from your results. Real value, however, will only be realized when your work contributes to more effective and informed decision-making, and concrete action is taken to improve programming.

These guides are prepared
for internal application.

They should, in no way, be viewed as
defining or modifying CIDA Policy.

We welcome any suggestions to
improve our work.

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