

Evaluation plan

Use

Usually, some evaluation measures are sketched out during the planning and design phase of a project. The evaluation plan allows a more detailed presentation of these measures. An evaluation plan is particularly helpful, and recommended, if a large evaluation is envisaged and if many questions regarding evaluation are left open in the project design. If an external organization is to be entrusted with the evaluation, an evaluation plan is compulsory – as a basis for discussion and for quotes. Pondering evaluation questions is helpful for clarifying one's own expectations and for developing new and interesting lines of thought. Even if one is unfamiliar with evaluation, it makes sense to start thinking about possible evaluation methods. External evaluation experts can help to choose the best methodology for obtaining answers to the evaluation questions.

Self-evaluation or external third-party evaluation?

Evaluations can be performed by the project team (self-evaluation) or entrusted to external evaluators. Each approach has advantages and disadvantages.

	This form of evaluation is adequate, if...
Self-evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – evaluation questions are rather simple – financial resources for evaluation are very limited – the project team has the time and professional know-how to perform an evaluation – much of the necessary data are available or are easy to collect – the evaluation is motivated by the project or desired by the executing organization, but not politically motivated – the evaluation was primarily conducted for learning purposes but not for questions of legitimization
External evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – complicated questions such as effect/outcome questions are to be answered – the project team has very little or no knowledge regarding evaluation methods – a competent external view on the project is desired – the project is large and important – the evaluation is to provide a sound basis for the multiplication of the project in other regions – a summative assessment of the project's effects is needed – a project is politically controversial and if the evaluation is needed to provide political legitimacy or to decide about its continuation – the evaluation is of general scientific interest

Increasingly, combinations of self and external evaluations are used. These benefit from the advantages of external third-party evaluation while conserving financial resources. The evaluation plan is helpful for answering questions regarding the kind of evaluation that is needed and it is a good basis for decisions.

This guide provides indications concerning the aspects to be covered in some depth in an evaluation plan. The list of items is also available as a Word template (see <http://www.quint-essenz.ch/de/tools/1062>).

Reference to other selected instruments of the quality system

Normally, the evaluation plan is inspired by the **project design**, where objectives and measures that are to be evaluated are described. Ideally, an effect model is available; this shows the systemic interactions between measures and desired effects. The **outcome model**, for example, can be used to create an effect model for any particular project. The evaluation can then be ideally planned on the basis of the effect model. The **evaluation chart** gives a good overview of the most important aspects of an evaluation. It can be used together with the evaluation plan or, if the volume of an evaluation is so small that no evaluation plan is needed, on its own. The chart provides a structured overview of the methods available for assessing the achievement of an objective and for answering other questions.

A reference framework for assessing quality in projects has been developed by quint-essenz - the **list of quality criteria**. It encourages systematic reflection on the project and provides structured feedback in the form of a quality profile, which shows up strengths and potential for improvement.

Finally, the results of any evaluation should be presented in the project's **final report**. Experiences and lessons learned are pooled and presented in consolidated form.

Remarks

Internationally approved standards are available to assess the quality of evaluations. For Switzerland, see: www.seval.ch/de/standards/index.cfm. The site also provides links to other regional and national evaluation standards.

Publish your evaluation report in the project database on www.quint-essenz.ch, so that others may profit from your experience.

Elements of an evaluation plan

Basic information	
<i>Person(s) responsible</i>	
<i>Tel</i>	
<i>E-Mail</i>	
<i>Date/Version number</i>	
<i>Remarks</i>	

1.	Initial situation	
1.1	<i>Short description of project</i>	<i>Describe the key features of the project and the context in which it takes place. (perhaps copy the abstract from the project design)</i>
1.2	<i>Evaluation purpose</i>	<i>Why is an evaluation needed? Who would benefit from the evaluation results? Which results would be used for what purpose?</i>
2.	Focus of the evaluation	
2.1	<i>Evaluation object</i>	<i>What exactly is to be evaluated? The entire project? An individual initiative? Where will the focus be in regard to content?</i>
2.2	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Which questions are to be answered by the evaluation? Do the answers to these questions serve the purpose of the evaluation?</i>
3.	Planning and methodology	
3.1	<i>Evaluation form and design</i>	<i>Is it a self-evaluation or an external third-party evaluation or a combination of both? Is the nature of the evaluation formative or summative? What is the evaluation design? (Before-after-design, control groups, ...)?</i>
3.2	<i>Process and methods of data collection and data analysis</i>	<i>Where is the relevant information that is required in order to answer evaluation questions? Which data sources are available? By which methods can the questions be answered? Is there a reasonable ratio between effort and benefit?</i>
3.3	<i>Access to the field</i>	<i>How can evaluation data be obtained? How is access to the field organized? Which questions/investigations are still open? Who is the contact person in the field?</i>
3.4	<i>Time planning</i>	<i>When are results needed and for what purpose? When does data collection and analysis of the data therefore need to take place? When are results needed in the form of an evaluation report?</i>
4.	Organization	
4.1	<i>Responsibilities and roles</i>	<i>Who is responsible for the evaluation? Who is involved in which role or function? Is there a network for the evaluation?</i>
4.2	<i>Evaluators' professional know-how</i>	<i>Which external evaluators or evaluation institutes are envisaged to carry out the evaluation? Which particular competencies and skills are required (knowledge of the topic/setting, methodologies, languages, ...)?</i>
4.3	<i>Financial resources</i>	<i>What price is affordable? Are the costs for the evaluation included in the budget for the project? Who is paying for what?</i>

5.	Valorization	
5.1	<i>Reporting</i>	<i>What is the format for the reporting of the evaluation results? Are intermediate and final reports required? In which language(s)? Are summaries, presentations, scientific articles or other forms of reporting desired?</i>
5.2	<i>Dissemination and exploitation</i>	<i>How are dissemination and exploitation of the evaluation results planned? Are there any additional products that might be useful (position papers, set of arguments, guidelines, checklists, ...)? Who should benefit from the results and in which way?</i>
6.	Other aspects	
6.1	<i>[...]</i>	<i>Are there any other aspects that need to be defined in an evaluation plan? Are there questions of data protection, for example?</i>