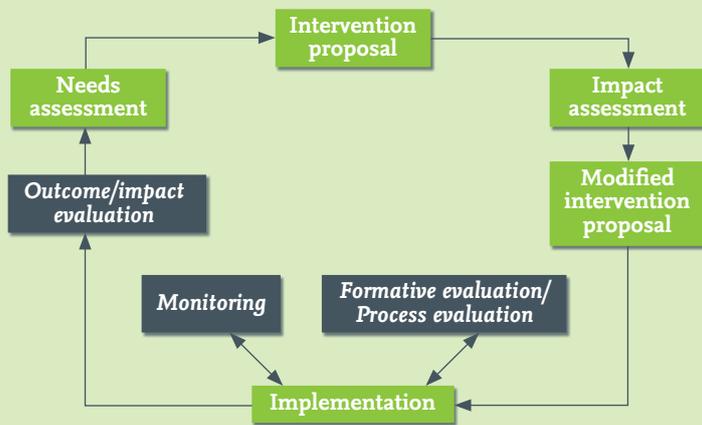


A QUICK GUIDE TO EVALUATION

WHAT IS EVALUATION?

Evaluation is a systematic process that involves collecting evidence in order to judge the quality, value or importance of something against a set of specific questions or criteria. Evaluation is undertaken in order to take action as a result of that judgement, such as adjusting a policy or modifying a project. In a policy or programme context, evaluations ideally take place during the implementation phase, or soon afterwards, and continue throughout the policy or programme cycle.

WHEN SHOULD AN EVALUATION BE CONDUCTED?



WHY CONDUCT AN EVALUATION?

Evaluating the progress, impact or success of an intervention is a useful part of any policy development process. Evaluations assist in policy development by:

- Increasing knowledge and understanding about the intervention and its objectives, including knowledge of the needs of potential beneficiaries and of effective practices
- Generating ideas for improving the intervention or for improving future similar interventions through better design, consultation, implementation, cost-effectiveness, and management structures
- Providing accountability to funders and stakeholders who often need tangible 'proof' of success and value for money to continue supporting a project
- Contributing to the general body of knowledge on effective interventions
- Providing evidence which can be used to inform public opinion, such as for gaining support for/against an intervention
- Helping decision-makers at all levels make better decisions about intervention direction, goals and allocation of resources.

WHAT CAN BE EVALUATED?

The term 'intervention' is used here for the wide variety of initiatives and activities that can be evaluated. These range from high-level policies to large programmes involving a number of discrete activities down to small projects aimed at specific objectives. Organisations (their structures and systems) can also be evaluated, as can services, and ways services are delivered. The common thread amongst all interventions appropriate for systematic evaluation is a tangible activity undertaken in order to meet a particular aim.

Some examples include:

- National strategies and policies (eg, a national energy efficiency strategy)
- Central government programmes (eg, affordable housing initiatives)
- Collaborative community projects (eg, problem gambling campaigns)
- International aid (eg, efforts to build institutional strength within governments).

WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS DO EVALUATIONS ANSWER?

What were the major achievements of the project?

- Did the intervention do what it was supposed to do?
- What resources were used?
- How did activities undertaken meet the goals of the intervention?

Why did some things work and other things fail?

- What were the reasons for the successes and failures?
- How realistic were the goals and objectives?
- Were there any flawed assumptions?

Has all of the effort actually made a difference?

- How did the intervention impact on knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviour?
- How did the project affect the target population, the wider community, participants, project providers and others?
- Who benefitted from the intervention and in what ways?

What could be done differently in the future?

- What more effective methods could be used?
- What other knowledge is required?
- Who else could have been involved?
- Were all the project's needs met?
- How were organisational systems adapted during the course of the project to become more effective?
- How could the evaluation findings be used to contribute to future interventions?
- How could the programme logic be improved?



Decisions on several conceptual levels need to be made before the evaluation can begin. Note that the lists provided below are not exhaustive.

Evaluation approach

This is the overall way of conceptualising the evaluation, incorporating a particular world-view and set of values. There are different theoretical approaches to evaluation. What is important to your organisation? What is the overall vision behind the intervention? What are you hoping to ultimately achieve with the evaluation? Here are some examples of different approaches to evaluation.

Evaluation approach	What is involved
Objectives-oriented	Focusing primarily on the objectives of the intervention and whether they have been met
Utilisation-focused	Determining evaluation methods on the basis of what will generate the most useful information for the primary users of the evaluation
Participatory	Focusing on collaborative working between evaluator and stakeholders to ensure the evaluation is designed and conducted in a useful and appropriate way.
Empowerment evaluation	Emphasising that the evaluation process should be empowering to the subjects (often resulting in involving intervention by participants or staff in the evaluation)

Evaluation type

The type of evaluation used depends on the intended purpose of the evaluation. What aspect of the intervention is the evaluation supposed to be looking at? Evaluations can have different purposes at different stages in an intervention cycle. Therefore, more than one evaluation type might apply to a single evaluation.

Evaluation type	What is involved	Stage in intervention
Formative evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted at improving the structure, management, or implementation of an intervention May include an evaluability assessment to determine whether an intervention is suitable for an evaluation May include identifying/analysing the programme logic (see below) Engaging with stakeholders and feeding back findings in real time 	Start ↓ Middle ↓ End
Process evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describing the activities or processes that took place during an intervention (ie. what actually happened) Helps in explaining why certain outcomes might have occurred 	
Impact, outcome and summative evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measuring the changes (short term or long term impacts/outcomes) brought about by an intervention, including positive/negative and intended/unintended effects Summative evaluation makes an overall judgement about the value of an intervention 	

Methods

Robust evaluations use a mix of several different methods. Some examples are given below.

Research method	What is involved	Benefits
Focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluator acts as a facilitator in a small group where participants hear and react to one another's responses 	Provides in-depth insight into attitudes and views
Key informant interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewing people who are selected for their expertise or first-hand knowledge of a topic Interviews can be structured or unstructured/ conversational 	Provides in-depth information Can be cost-effective Helpful in understanding complex issues
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describing activities, behaviours, actions or other observable human experiences through direct observation 	Provides rich, detailed information that is helpful for understanding behaviours
Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders/participants provide responses to a questionnaire Can be a self-completed survey (such as postal or web-based), or completed with a researcher present (such as face-to-face or telephone-based surveys) 	Can capture information from a large group of stakeholders Provides a useful snapshot of a population's attitudes and views Can be cost-effective
Analysis of administrative data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysing data already collected during an intervention (such as a register of attendance, financial data, the type and amount of services provided, and demographic data on participants) 	Provides quantitative (numeric) data which is less subject to bias Useful for identifying trends and patterns Can be readily accessible Can be cost-effective
Diaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants recording information about the intervention during its course 	Data is recorded immediately (as it happens) by participants so is likely to be accurate



Below is an example of the steps *Allen + Clarke* use in performing a typical process/outcomes evaluation. Some of the actions will occur concurrently.

Research method	What is involved
Project scoping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research an intervention's history • Meet with clients to clarify the evaluation's purpose(s), goals, objectives and expected use • Develop a logic model describing the connection between the activities of the intervention and the expected results • Identify indicators and kinds of information which can be used to measure value • Develop questions about the intervention for which the evaluation should be able to provide answers • Identify and communicate with stakeholders
Evaluation preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop specific evaluation tools and methods for data collection centred on the evaluation questions • Identify potential participants and sources of information • Communicate regularly with stakeholders and participants • Allocate data collection tasks and begin monitoring processes
Data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information collection needs to be practical, systematic, ongoing, accurate and ethical • Use initial findings to recommend immediate changes to an intervention • Review and refine data collection methods • Refine the project's logic model (formative evaluation)
Analyse and interpret the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarise and analyse data as it is collected: summaries made during the evaluation can save work at the end • Identify key patterns, themes and issues by analysing and aggregating the data • Share and develop findings iteratively amongst the team, including team members responsible for different methods • Identify what worked well, why and in what circumstances • Prepare a summary or top-line report of findings
Communicate the results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure consistent progress reports to the client at all stages • The final report should be practical, easy to understand, and include strategies for future success • Present information using oral reports to participants, news releases, community presentations, workshops and published papers

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In deciding how to conduct an evaluation you should also consider issues of practicality. The type of evaluation and methods you plan to use need to be achievable in the real world.

Key questions include:

- How can you ensure that key decision makers receive the information in the most useful, cost-effective fashion?
- In which form will the intended participants best understand the evaluation questions?
- Which method(s) will provide all of the information required?
- Which methods will supply sufficiently accurate information?
- Does the evaluation need to consider Māori values and perspectives and how will this influence the type of evaluation you use, the methods, and the way you communicate results?
- Will qualitative or quantitative data (or both) be needed?
- Will the evaluation be done internally (eg, by staff of the intervention being evaluated) or by external evaluators, or by a mixture of both (eg, an outsider brought in for a limited time to help staff set up and run an evaluation process)? External evaluators can bring expertise and independence to the evaluation process.
- What is the cultural context of the participants/staff/target group?
- Are there budgetary constraints?
- Are there time constraints?
- What are the values and expertise of the evaluator/s?

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD EVALUATION

Plan to evaluate – plan the evaluation at the start of the intervention and tailor the design appropriately to the size and scope of the intervention.

Use multiple and mixed methods – use two or more different methods for collecting and analysing information.

Communicate limitations and problems – identify potential limitations with the methodology prior to the evaluation and also communicate problems which occur during the evaluation.

Clarify goals – be explicit about the purpose, intended outputs, outcomes and use of the evaluation, and be mindful of these throughout the evaluation process.

Identify and involve stakeholders – identify and respect the dignity, values and perspectives of all individuals and groups that may have an interest in the evaluation.

Account for the interests of all stakeholders – be aware of the interests and attributes of stakeholders (including ethnicity, gender, age, culture, faith and socio-economic status), and consider the most effective way to accommodate these in the evaluation.

Consider the wider public – account for the broader public interest in addition to considering the specific needs of the stakeholders.

Use the evidence properly – conclusions should demonstrate comprehensive use of all the available information and be justified in terms of the evidence.

Communicate results appropriately – take care to disseminate results clearly and accurately, while accounting for all potential biases, and in a manner comprehensible to all stakeholders.

Provide useful recommendations – ensure that the evaluation generates practical ideas for improving the intervention or future intervention(s).



PROGRAMME LOGIC

A programme logic model is a useful starting point when evaluating an intervention's processes and outcomes. The model helps determine when and what to evaluate, the questions to ask, and the appropriate process and outcome measures. A programme logic model links outcomes (both short and long term) with programme activities/processes and the theoretical assumptions/principles of the programme.⁽²⁾

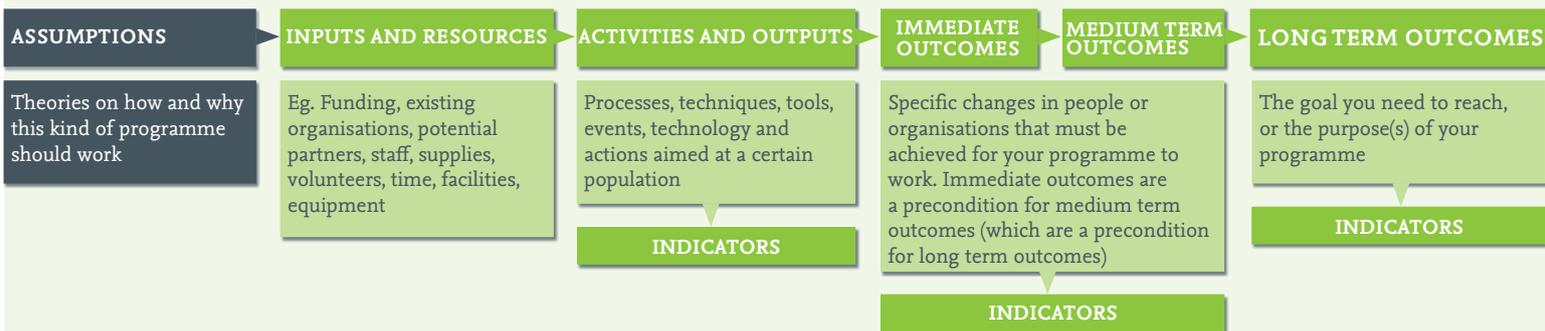
A programme logic model is a useful framework to identify outputs and outcomes that will feed into the evaluation. As part of the framework, a number of indicators are defined and tracked in order to measure outputs and outcomes. Data collected for the indicators may be quantitative (eg, number of brochures distributed, extent of drug use, number of services received) or qualitative (eg, descriptions of counselling sessions, descriptions of learning or behaviour change). Note that there are many ways of visually modelling programme logic, and the diagram below is simply a useful starting point.

STAKEHOLDERS

There will be different groups of stakeholders in every intervention. A stakeholder is any person or group with an interest in the intervention or in the results of the evaluation. Potential stakeholders include:

- People involved in implementing the intervention
- People affected by, or the target of, the intervention
- Iwi and hapū groups
- Other organisations involved in the intervention
- Financial supporters
- Leaders in the community
- Decision makers and policy makers.

PROGRAMME LOGIC TEMPLATE



ENDNOTE (full citations in Bibliography)

[1] This section draws on a number of sources including Patton, M.Q. Utilization-Focused Evaluation.

Paul Duignan, "Approaches and terminology in programme and policy evaluation" in N Lunt, C Davidson and K McKegg (eds.). Evaluating Policy and Practice: A New Zealand Reader. 77-90.

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[2] W.K Kellogg Foundation. Logic Model Development Guide. III.

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