

## **I. Monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring is about collecting information that will help you answer questions about your project. It is important that this information is collected in a planned, organised and routine way. You can use this information to report on your project and to help you evaluate.

All organisations keep records and notes, and discuss what they are doing. This simple checking becomes monitoring when information is collected routinely and systematically against a plan. The information might be about activities or services, your users, or about outside factors affecting your organisation or project.

Monitoring information is collected at specific times: daily, monthly or quarterly. At some point you need to bring this information together so that it can answer questions such as:

- how well are we doing?
- are we doing the right things?
- what difference are we making?

At this point you are starting to evaluate. While monitoring is routine and ongoing, evaluation is an in-depth study, taking place at specific points in the life of the project.

Evaluation ?

Evaluation is about using monitoring and other information you collect to make judgments about your project. It is also about using the information to make changes and improvements.

Evaluation aims to answer agreed questions and to make a judgement against specific criteria. Like other research, for a good evaluation, data must be collected and analysed systematically, and its interpretation considered carefully. Assessing 'value' - or the worth of something - and then taking action makes evaluation distinctive. The results of an evaluation are intended to be used.

There are many different perspectives and approaches to evaluation. Answering questions such as 'Why are we doing it?' 'Who is the evaluation for?' and 'What are the key issues to address?' will help you decide whether you wish to self-evaluate or to have an external evaluation. The questions will help you to think about what you want to focus on. For example, this could be:

- your organisational structure and how it works
- how you carry out your services or activities
- how users experience the project
- what changes or benefits the project brings about

## **What is self-evaluation?**

When an organisation uses its own people and their skills to carry out evaluation (as opposed to hiring an external agency to carry out the evaluation) this is known as self-evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation is built into the everyday activities of the project so that it becomes part of what you do.

## ***Why evaluate?***

monitoring and evaluation not only measure how well you are doing, but also help you to be more effective. Evaluation has two main purposes:

### **For learning and development**

Monitoring and evaluating your services will help you assess how well you are doing in order to help you do it better. It is about asking what has happened and why - what is and what is not working. It is about using evaluation to learn more about an organisation's activities, and then using what has been learnt.

### **For accountability - to show others that you are effective**

Funders and other 'stakeholders' want to know whether a project has spent its money appropriately. There is pressure from funders to provide them with evidence of success. Many projects have to respond to this demand in order to survive.

## **Evaluation for learning and development**

Using evaluation to learn more about an organisation's activities, and then using what has been learnt.

## **Evaluation for accountability**

To demonstrate achievements.

There may be some tension between these two approaches. But it is important for many voluntary organisations to find ways in which both the need for accountability and the need for learning can be met. Many funders are also becoming more interested not only in whether a project has worked, but why.

The purpose of evaluation will change the type of questions asked. For accountability, the questions might be:

- has the project worked?
- how has money been spent?
- should the project continue?

For learning, you might ask:

- what are the project's strengths and weaknesses?

- what are the implementation problems?
- why have things worked, or not?
- what are the good practice issues?

Evaluation should not only answer questions. It should also prompt fresh thinking within your organisation and in your contacts with external agencies. If you have asked the right questions, an evaluation will tell you not only what you have achieved, but also how you did it and what was most effective. It will help you find the areas where improvement or change is needed, and help you to provide the best service to users.

**II. Strategy** is a long term plan of action designed to achieve a particular [goal](#), most often "winning". Strategy is differentiated from [tactics](#) or immediate actions with resources at hand by its nature of being extensively premeditated, and often practically rehearsed. Strategies are used to make the problem or problems easier to solve, and also for you to understand it more.

**Gap Analysis:** Gap analysis naturally flows from benchmarking or other assessments. Once we understand what is the general expectation of performance, we can then compare that with current capabilities, and this becomes the gap analysis. Such analysis can be performed at the strategic or operational level of an organization.

**Goal:** A specific intended result of a strategy; often used interchangeably with Objective. See also Outcome Goal, Output Goal, Performance Goal, Strategic Goal. [Note: the term "goal" is used in a wide variety of ways in planning; e.g. as a task or function to perform, strategic result or outcome; an objective, a measure, a target, a deliverable, a vision, etc. For this reason readers are advised to avoid this term, or else to define it carefully and use it consistently in planning documents.]

**Indicator:** A simple metric that is intended to be easy to measure. Its intent is to obtain general information about performance trends by means of surveys, telephone interviews, and the like.

**Input:** Resources (funds, labor, time, equipment, space, technology etc.) used to produce outputs and outcomes.

**Key Success Factors (KSF):** The three to five broad areas on which an organization must focus in order to achieve its vision. They may be major weaknesses that must be fixed before other goals can be achieved. They are not as specific as strategies. Sometimes called **strategic themes** or **critical success factors (CSF)**. (Mark Graham Brown, [Winning Score](#)).

**Metrics:** Often used interchangeably with measurements. However, it may be helpful to separate these definitions. Metrics are the various parameters or ways of looking at a process that is to be measured. Metrics define *what* is to be measured. Some metrics are specialized, so they can't be directly benchmarked or interpreted outside a

mission-specific business unit. Other measures will be generic, and they can be aggregated across business units, e.g. cycle time, customer satisfaction, and financial results.

**Objective:** An aim or intended result of a strategy. See **goal**.

**Outcome:** A description of the intended result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out a program or activity. (OMB). The end result that is sought (examples: in the private sector, financial profitability; in the public sector, cleaner air or reduced incidence of disease).

**Outcome measure:** A long-term, ultimate measure of success or strategic effectiveness. An event, occurrence, or condition that is outside the activity or program itself and is of direct importance to customers or the public. We also include indicators of service quality, those of importance to customers, under this category. (Dr. Harry Hatry)

**Output:** Products and services delivered. Outputs are the immediate products of internal activity: the amount of work done within the organization or by its contractors (such as miles of road repaired or number of calls answered).

**Performance-based budgeting:** A management process in which performance of various activities in an organization is measured, and budgets for further work on these activities is adjusted based on their performance. (Note: this does not necessarily imply that budgets for poorly-performing activities will be reduced; see the discussion [here](#).)

**Performance goal:** A target level of performance expressed as a tangible, measurable objective, against which actual achievement can be compared, including a goal expressed as a quantitative standard, value, or rate. (OMB).

**Performance indicator:** A particular value or characteristic used to measure output or outcome.

**Performance measurement:** The process of developing measurable indicators that can be systematically tracked to assess progress made in achieving predetermined goals and using such indicators to assess progress in achieving these goals [GAO]. A performance gap is the gap between what customers and stakeholders expect and what each process and related subprocesses produces in terms of quality, quantity, time, and cost of services and products [GAO].

**Performance metric:** see Metrics.