



Evaluation phases: Reflection guide

This tool is designed to support groups in working through some of the key steps in monitoring and evaluation work. It provides high-level guidance to support your group with planning, reflection and action across the entire evaluation process.

The tool promotes an approach to evaluation that is:

- participatory and community-led
- culturally relevant
- iterative and ongoing.

The five phases introduced in the above section (plan and design, start your evaluation, using your findings, full circle and tell the story) are each broken down into practical, manageable steps. Under each step, you'll find a checklist of key considerations to help guide both the design and implementation of your evaluation.

This tool is intended to be used throughout the full lifecycle of a program or activity. Ideally, groups will engage with it from the very beginning and revisit each phase as their work evolves. That said, it is equally useful at any stage, whether you are midway through a project or approaching its conclusion, to support reflection and identify opportunities for strengthening current or future work.

If your project is already underway, this tool can still add value. It offers a chance to reflect on what could be done differently next time, and to make note of any considerations that may have been overlooked.

You might like to work through the checklists progressively, marking off items as they are addressed. Any remaining unchecked considerations can help highlight potential gaps or areas that may need further attention.

It's important to recognise that evaluation processes are complex, varied and highly contextual. Each group, community, program or activity will likely require additional steps or considerations beyond those outlined here.



Phase 1: Plan and design the evaluation

1.1 Decide on the purpose and the scope.

Clarify the purpose and scope of the evaluation early in the planning process. In most cases, evaluation should be integrated from the start, rather than added as an afterthought once the program or activity is already underway.

Some key considerations:

- We have a clear understanding of the primary purpose of the evaluation.
- We have a Theory of Change guiding the program or activity, if applicable.
- We are clear on the intended uses of the evaluation findings.
- We know who will be involved and their roles and responsibilities.
- We have decided on the level and form of community involvement.
- We have considered different evaluation approaches (e.g., participatory methods).
- We have a realistic and agreed-on timeline.
- We have an awareness of relevant ethical considerations and requirements.
- We have a set of guiding principles or community values that we want to shape this evaluation.

Notes:



Phase 1: Plan and design the evaluation

1.2 Identify Indigenous success measures.

Collaborate with community and/or key stakeholders to define indicators of success that are meaningful and relevant. Often, these success measures will align with your group's strategic or business plan to ensure that what is being measured reflects broader priorities and long-term aspirations.

Some key considerations:

- We have a shared understanding of what success looks like for the community or group/s involved, and how this connects to strategic priorities.
- We have identified measures of success that reflect local values /priorities as well as organisational goals (if applicable).
- We understand that outcomes may differ in importance across groups (e.g., Elders, youth, families).
- We have considered how both qualitative and quantitative indicators can be captured.

Notes:



Phase 1: Plan and design the evaluation

1.3 Plan ways to gather Indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

Decide how knowledge and data will be gathered, ideally involving diverse methods (storytelling, talking circles, art, observation, etc.).

Some key considerations:

- We are using culturally relevant and appropriate methods (e.g., storytelling, talking circles, art, observation, surveys).
- We have identified who will lead, participate in and document these activities.
- We have determined how data will be recorded, stored and managed.
- We have considered how to ensure accessibility and inclusivity for all participants.
- We have assessed current capacity to carry out this step and identified whether external expertise or support is required.

Notes:



Phase 2: Start your evaluation

2.1 Gather Indigenous knowledge as data.

Use the data gathering methods you planned to capture insights, experiences, and outcomes.

Some key considerations:

- We have confirmed the data gathering methods identified in Phase 1.
- We have made any necessary adjustments to the methods.
- We have confirmed who will lead each activity, including whether different methods require different facilitators.
- We have identified and are addressing any gaps in participation.
- We are recording and securely storing all data collected.
- We have identified and assigned key individuals to manage the data during evaluation and after completion.

Notes:



Phase 2: Start your evaluation

2.2 Adjust as you go.

Maintain flexibility throughout your evaluation. Allow evaluation processes to evolve based on feedback, emerging insights, changing circumstances and so on.

Some key considerations:

- We are regularly reviewing methods and overall progress.
- We are updating our evaluation plan as needed.
- We are incorporating community feedback throughout the process.
- We have been asking ourselves guiding questions, including:
 - Are the methods effective and culturally appropriate?
 - Are there any ethical, logistical, cultural or other concerns?
 - How is community feedback being incorporated?
 - Do timelines, roles or methods need modification?

Notes:



Phase 3: Using your findings

3.1 Interpret the data.

Bring stakeholders and community together to interpret the data, discuss what is working, identify areas for improvement and discuss what challenges exist.

Some key considerations:

- We have scheduled stakeholder and/or community reflection sessions to interpret data collaboratively.
- We have identified emerging patterns, successes and challenges from the data.
- We are documenting interpretations, insights and emerging priorities.
- We have developed a set of guiding questions to discuss findings, including:
 - What is working well?
 - What challenges are emerging?
 - Are Indigenous success measures being met?

Notes:



Phase 3: Using your findings

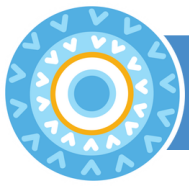
3.2 Plan and implement improvements.

Use the lessons learned to adapt things like your programs, policies and evaluation method.

Some key considerations:

- We have an idea of what changes are needed based on what we've learned.
- We have confirmed who will lead planning and decision-making for these changes.
- We know who will implement changes.
- We understand how these changes can strengthen things like community relationships and outcomes.
- We are applying evaluation insights to inform future program design and evaluation approaches.
- We are ensuring that any changes made align with cultural values and community priorities.
- We have identified successes and stories to share in order to celebrate and honour community contributions.
- We know how improvements will be communicated to ensure transparency and accountability.
- We have identified how lessons learned will inform future evaluation cycles.
- We have explored any opportunities to influence policy or broader systems using community-informed insights.
- We are ensuring the community or group maintains ownership and leadership of the evaluation process moving forward.

Notes:



Phase 4: Tell the story

4.1 Share your findings.

Share your evaluation findings in ways that honour community voices and cultural practices.

Some key considerations:

- We have decided on culturally resonant ways to present findings (e.g., storytelling, art, song, dance, visual mapping, digital media).
- We have developed a narrative that connects evaluation findings to our community's lived experience or traditions, if appropriate.
- We have considered using talking circles or other group reflection methods to support shared learning and collective insight.
- We have identified facilitators or storytellers to lead each presentation or reflection activity, if applicable.
- We have determined which findings can be shared publicly and which should remain private.
- We have ensured a balanced representation of both challenges and successes in our story.
- We have identified unexpected outcomes or stories that may need further exploration.

Notes:



Phase 5: Full circle evaluation

5.1 Regularly reflect.

M&E work should be ongoing! Build in opportunities for continuous reflection.

Some key considerations:

- We are integrating reflection into ongoing work, rather than treating it as a one-time activity.
- We are identifying practices that are most meaningful for shared learning.
- We know who is participating in reflection activities and whose voices may be missing.
- We have scheduled regular reflection opportunities throughout the evaluation process (not just at the end).
- We have integrated reflection into existing activities (meetings, gatherings, program sessions).
- We are using culturally meaningful practices (e.g., ceremony, yarning circles, community gatherings).
- We are ensuring diverse voices are included in reflections (Elders, youth, families, staff, knowledge holders).
- We are creating safe and inclusive spaces for sharing experiences and perspectives.
- We are documenting reflections in accessible and culturally appropriate ways.

Notes: