

# PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### Preamble

This section discusses proposed mechanisms and procedures for monitoring of project operations to ensure that activities occur as planned, that they remain directed towards stated objectives, and that appropriate corrective action is taken if required

Specifically, the discussion should indicate who will be responsible for preparing periodic project progress and final technical reports and for the accounting of expenditures

### Learning Objectives

1. To understand what monitoring and evaluation mean.
2. To identify and explain the four steps of effective evaluation.
3. To know the various types of evaluation.

### Learning Outcome

1. By the end of this topic, students will be able to understand the definition of monitoring and evaluation.
2. By the end of this topic Students should be able to explain various types of evaluation.
3. By the end of this topic, students will be able to know what monitoring involve.

### Monitoring

It is the systematic and routine collection of information from projects and programmes for four main purposes:

- To learn from experiences to improve practices and activities in the future;
- To have internal and external accountability of the resources used and the results obtained;
- To take informed decisions on the future of the initiative;
- To promote empowerment of beneficiaries of the initiative

# PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

Monitoring is a periodically recurring task beginning in the planning stage of a project or programme. Monitoring allows results, processes and experiences to be documented and used as a basis to steer decision-making and learning processes. Monitoring is checking progress against plans. The data acquired through monitoring is used for evaluation.

## **Evaluation**

It is assessing, as systematically and objectively as possible, a completed project or programme (or a phase of an ongoing project or programme that has been completed). Evaluations appraise data and information that inform strategic decisions, thus improving the project or programme in the future.

Evaluations should help to draw conclusions about five main aspects of the intervention:

- relevance
- effectiveness
- efficiency
- impact
- sustainability

The evaluation component is two-fold: (1) product evaluation; and (2) process evaluation. Product evaluation addresses results that can be attributed to the project, as well as the extent to which the project has satisfied its desired objectives. Process evaluation addresses how the project was conducted, in terms of consistency with the stated plan of action and the effectiveness of the various activities within the plan. Most Federal agencies now require some form of program evaluation among grantees. The requirements of the proposed project should be explored carefully. Evaluations may be conducted by an internal staff member, an evaluation firm or both. The applicant should state the amount of time needed to evaluate, how the feedback will be distributed among the proposed staff, and a schedule for review and comment for this type of communication. Evaluation designs may start at the beginning, middle or end of a project, but the applicant should specify a start-up time. It is practical to submit an evaluation design at the start of a project for two reasons.

# PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

## The Four Steps of Effective Evaluation

Everyone evaluates. But why, when I walk into a room full of clients and suggest that we need to evaluate what they are doing, oxygen is sucked through the vents, my clients begin to sweat and many times, they shut down. Simply asking people about the outcome or impact of their work is distress for three main reasons:

- There is a fear that evaluation is really an evaluation of them
- If evaluation is truly an evaluation of them, then their job might be in jeopardy
- Evaluation demonstrates a failure of their ideas

There is an element of truth in these beliefs because evaluation is used to measure a person's job performance. In my line of work, as a health educator, I use evaluation as a way to see how ideas and concepts impact the lives of the people they are meant to help. This may contrast what evaluation purists believe, but I am going to gamble that most of us are not out to implement complicated and large evaluations. When large-scale, complicated evaluations are conducted, you may be confused with all the information that comes back. This may cause you to lose the general focus of what you were seeking to find out in the first place. When this happens, the data loses its value and you have no plan for it. Eventually what you spent a great deal of time and money on ends up in some file stored away, in a dark office or under an old pile of books. Instead of having useful information you have nothing.

In this article, I want to take a few moments to spell out some simple ways to implement an evaluation. I will provide illustrations of evaluation planning that will maximize your time and deliver results you will value and use. Keep in mind, this article is focused on those who need to evaluate simple community based programs, classes or activities.

### Step one — Plan for Evaluation

More often than not, clients will call me in to evaluate the program they have just implemented. When I ask them what their objectives are for this program, I usually get an answer similar to, —What do you mean by objectives? respond, —What is the reason for creating and delivering this program? After spending a bit of time determining what they expected to have come from their program, we have created their set of program evaluations. But this is a classic case of putting the cart

# PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

before-the-horse evaluation. The best way to do evaluation is to first plan for it while you are designing your program. Remember that you also need to consider how you will share your findings.

## **Step Two — Decide How much Information you are Going to Need**

How do you intend to learn about your program? Do you want to learn about changes in behavior, knowledge or attitudes of your program participants? Will you need to have a control group or can you simply sample from the individuals attending your program? Will you need to conduct a pretest to gather baseline data? Is it your intent to measure changes over time?

In planning this stage of your evaluation, you must have an idea about your target audience and how accessible they are to you as well. If you have one shot to survey your participants, this will influence how much information you can gather for your evaluation. Conversely, if you have access to this same group for a long period of time, over multiple occasions, you may be able to measure changes over time and determine, to a greater degree, how your program has impacted their lives.

Knowing the accessibility of your target audience is a critical first step in deciding how much information you can gather. But there are other important issues to consider when determining how much information to gather, which leads to step three.

## **Step Three — Developing your Methods of Evaluation**

Some major issues that influence how you design your evaluation tools include expense and labor intensity. There are other issues that you need to consider when developing your tools, which include literacy level, age, cultural, educational and language factors.

How useful will your evaluation results be if all your surveys are returned with no responses on them? How different would your evaluation be if you were delivering it to an audience of third graders? Obviously, you will need to design a method that is child sensitive. Conversely, if you are working with a group of seniors who are averse to filling out another form, you will need to consider evaluation techniques that will more appropriately determine program outcomes.

# PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

## **Types of Evaluation**

Methods of evaluation incorporate elements of time and type. They can take place before, during and after a program is implemented. Once you have determined your program outcomes and how much information you are going to need, you will need to decide the best way to gather your data. The types of data fall into four categories: formative, process, impact and outcomes. For each of these categories there are specific places and ways to gather data. Types of evaluation include:

### **Formative**

It takes place in the lead up to the project, as well as during the project in order to improve the project design as it is being implemented (continual improvement).

Formative evaluation often lends itself to qualitative methods of inquiry

Formative evaluation, including pretesting, is a way to determine where your target audience is prior to implementing your program. When you are able to see where your audience is prior to delivering your program, you can better develop content and styles for educating them.

**Tools for use in formative evaluation:** readability tests, surveys, focus groups and individual, in-depth interviews.

### **Process**

Process evaluation examines the journey involved in implementing a program or activity. It helps you look at how the implementation process is working and where you may have to adjust the program to better suit participant or situational needs.

### **Impact**

When you want to find out if what you did made a difference in someone's life, you would need to get information after a period ranging between 5 years to 10 years. This

# PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

type of information will let you know whether or not participants gained any knowledge because of what you taught them or experienced an attitude or belief shift because of what you taught them.

Impact evaluation describes the outputs of your inputs. It can also describe other things that color in an otherwise black and white picture. Besides the gains in knowledge or shift in attitudes, impact data can measure expressed intentions of the target audience, shortterm or intermediate behavior shifts (purchasing sunscreen) and policies initiated or other institutional changes made.

**Tools for use in impact evaluation:** pretests and posttests, baseline surveys prior to attending a class or activity, follow-up surveys after attending an event, class or activity, clinical data (especially if you are using a class to influence a health condition, you will want to measure physical changes in your participants).

## **Outcome**

Because the focus of this article is more about common sense evaluation, you will not necessarily need to conduct outcome evaluation. However, outcome evaluation is important to know about because it is the most comprehensive of the four evaluation types and focuses on the long-range results of the program and changes or improvements in health status as a result. In everyday type of program evaluation, these types of evaluations are rare because you don't have the ability to keep track of the participants in the program; the program lacks staff for the intensive follow-up and generally a lack of funds to implement this type of evaluation.

Information obtained from an impact study may include changes in morbidity and mortality, changes in absenteeism from work or school, long-term maintenance of desired behavior or rates of those who might leave the —study.¶

**Tools for use in Outcome Evaluation:** print media review, public surveys (telephone surveys of self-reported behavior), studies of public behavior or health change (i.e. data on physician visits or changes in public's health status) and death and hospitalization

# PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

data.

## Differences between Evaluation and Monitoring

### Evaluation

Is a periodic assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and/or sustainability of an activity or intervention;	
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Is a systematic search for answers about an intervention (project, program, or policy); and	
Measures the effects of an intervention and compares them with the goals and objectives of the intervention	

### Monitoring

- Involves continuous or ongoing collection and analysis of information about implementation to review progress;
- Compares actual progress with what was planned so that adjustments can be made in implementation; and
- Is an internal activity that is the responsibility of those who manage implementation procedures, thus representing a good management practice

In general, monitoring is integral to evaluation. During an evaluation, information from previous monitoring processes is used to understand the ways in which the project or programme developed and stimulated change.

Monitoring focuses on the measurement of the following aspects of an intervention:

- On quantity and quality of the implemented activities (outputs: What do we do? How do we manage our activities?)
- On processes inherent to a project or programme (outcomes: What were the effects /changes that occurred as a result of your intervention?)
- On processes external to an intervention (impact: Which broader, long-term effects were triggered by the implemented activities in combination with other environmental factors?)

The evaluation process is an analysis or interpretation of the collected data which delves

# PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

deeper into the relationships between the results of the project/programme, the effects produced by the project/programme and the overall impact of the project/programme.

Reflective Questions
Explain the meaning of evaluation and monitoring.
Discuss the various types of evaluation
Critically analyze the differences between monitoring and evaluation.

## Reference

Blake, R and Bly, R. (2011) *The Elements of Business Writing*.UK.