START DO-IT-YOURSELF EVALUATION MANUAL:

SUMMARISED ONLINE VERSION

An integrated approach to project management and evaluation

by The Foundation for Young Australians and
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THE FOUNDATION FOR YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

The Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) was formed on 1 June 2000 when The Australian Youth Foundation and The Queen's Trust for Young Australians merged. The Foundation is committed to assisting young Australians aged up to 30 years to reach their full potential, and will spend in excess of $3 million each year on providing opportunities for young people.

Over 50% of funds will be spent on projects and programs to assist disadvantaged young people, and 50% will be dedicated to developing leadership potential and promoting the pursuit of excellence. Twenty per cent of all The Foundation's funding is dedicated to programs to assist indigenous young people.

DR COLIN SHARP

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He has over 14 years' experience in consulting to human services management and Boards of Directors on staff development, organisational change, research, evaluation and quality assurance. He has previously provided advice on management, performance measurement, or evaluation practice for a range of public, private and community organisations, including the Department of Family and Community Service (SA), Commonwealth and State Health Minister's Advisory Committee (Multi-Purpose Services pilot projects), Commonwealth Department of Finance, Spastic Society (Victoria) and Roads and Traffic Authority of Victoria.

Dr Sharp is a registered psychologist in South Australian. He has a PhD (Clinical Neuropsychology) from the University of Melbourne.

INTRODUCTION

This manual is a “do-it-yourself” evaluation guide for organisations and individuals involved in conducting projects. It aims to assist organisations to design and use evaluation as an integral tool to enhance the success of projects, from the planning stages through to completion and final reporting.

While not all the techniques introduced in this manual are relevant for all projects, the need for evaluation is. The manual should be used as a starting point for evaluation. Project stakeholders are encouraged to experiment, adapt and amend the material provided to suit their particular circumstances.

This web-based version of the START manual is a summary of a written publication produced by the former Australian Youth Foundation in 1996. For further information, the reader is referred to the written version plus other useful resources listed at the end of this document

WHAT IS EVALUATION?

Everyone evaluates whenever they judge the value of something, or make decisions about the best plan of action.

These days it is commonly expected by all governments and most non-government health and welfare agencies that their services, projects and programs should be regularly evaluated to ensure they are accountable for the money spent on them. It is therefore important that service providers and participants in projects and programs collect and provide information to assess how efficient, effective and appropriate projects are. Many funding bodies, including the Commonwealth government and The Foundation for Young Australians, recommend assessing these three criteria in order to determine a project’s contribution:

1. **Efficiency:** which is a measure of outputs (such as products or services completed) over inputs (such as staffing and $ spent), or the amount of output for the given input. This is useful in accounting for the money used.

2. **Effectiveness:** which is a measure of the extent to which output achieves the program’s objectives. It shows the relationship between the outcomes for the intended recipients (such as young people) and the objectives of the project. It helps demonstrate the performance of the project.

3. **Appropriateness:** which identifies the relevance of program objectives to actual community or young people’s needs. This criteria addresses the broader social concerns and keeps focused on the contribution in the project’s context.

WHAT IS START?

START is a dynamic but straightforward evaluation process which encourages participation, learning and sharing.

The five key components of this method of evaluation are easily remembered because the first letters of each spell out the word START. Briefly explained, START stands for:

S trategy for the project.

T arget groups and needs to be met by the project.

A ims, intended outcomes and when they will be met.

R eview of project performance and its outcomes for participants.

T ransfer and sharing of the lessons learned.

It is not necessary for you to begin your evaluation process at a particular point in the process that is outlined. Enter the START cycle at whatever stage is appropriate for your project now.

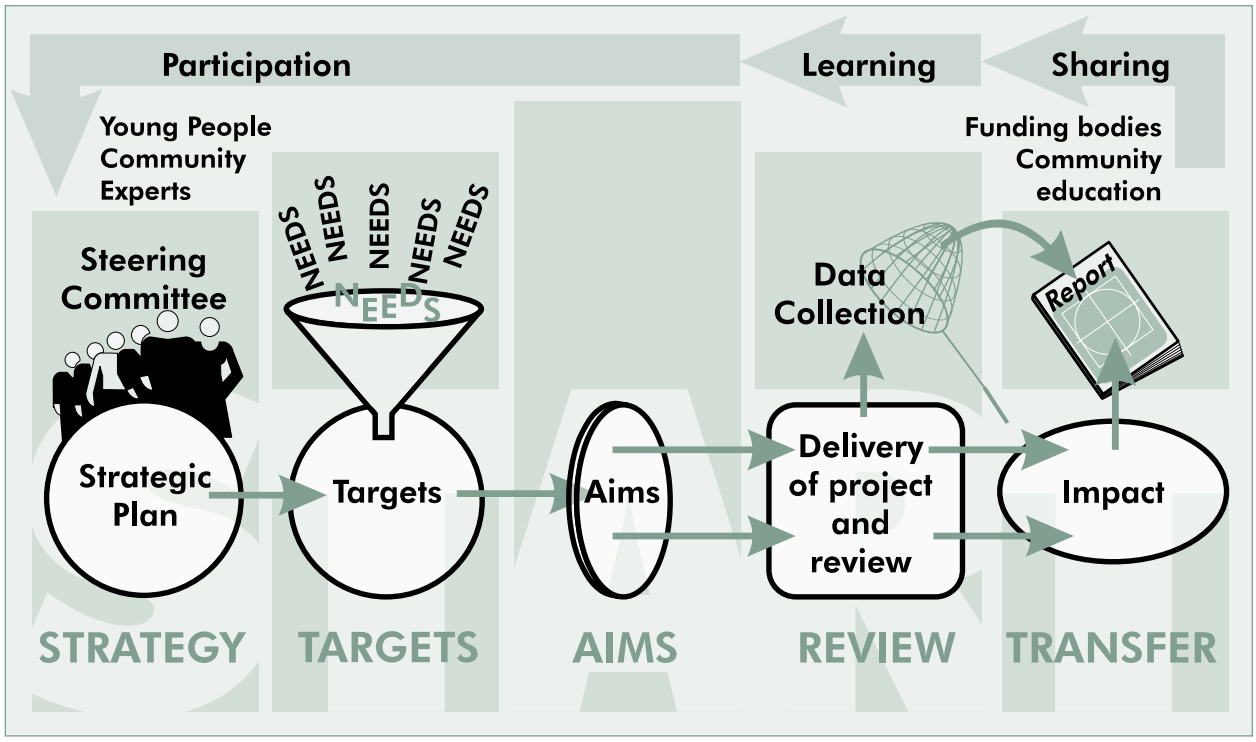

Figure 1: An overview of the components and links of the START evaluation framework

STRATEGY

1. Representation

The formation of a Steering Committee is the first step in ensuring participation, learning and sharing. It must be made up of people who truly represent project stakeholders, especially young people. (There are cases where client representation might not be possible and alternative strategies need to be developed.) In particular, participants who are part of the target group for the project should be part of planning and management. This will give them a stronger sense of ownership, increasing the opportunity for success in the short and long term.

It sometimes makes more sense to involve representatives who can speak for target participants.There should be ongoing consultation with representatives of all stakeholders. This could take the form of interviews about the kinds of services and information currently provided and needed. Interviewees should include young people, professionals associated with relevant services for young people and other stakeholders. Circulation of draft plans is one way of generating a response.

To be as thorough and strategic as possible, the interests of all stakeholders must be taken into account and incorporated into the strategic plan (what do they want? at what cost?). Appropriate representation is one significant way to ensure that this is done.

2. Specialist Advice

It is strongly recommended that the Steering Committee includes some people with relevant skills and experience. In addition, the Steering Committee should ensure that relevant specialist advice is sought on such matters as project design, ethics, standards of evaluation, project management or any other matter related to the successful conduct of the project.

3. Strategic Planning

A strategic plan is a useful preliminary tool which can explain and help gain agreement about the project's purpose and what is to be achieved. A strategic plan, though, is only a documentary record or map of the planning process and can soon become out of date. It is valuable to revisit and update your strategic plan at various intervals during the life of the project.

Drafting a Strategic Plan

The techniques and worksheets in this manual will enable Steering Committees to ensure that evaluation forms an integral part of the strategic planning of the project. However, the process of drafting the Strategic Plan encompasses other important elements as well.

It is not within the scope of this manual to provide detailed guidelines on how strategic planning should be conducted and documented.

Basically, the secrets of a useful strategic plan are:
- It is agreed to by all concerned.
- It is practical and the broad goals and steps are clear in advance.
- It can be monitored by all concerned so that there is little doubt about progress/performance and results.
- It can be regularly updated and adjusted based on results obtained along the way.

Keeping these things in mind, it is suggested that the following should be included when drafting a Strategic Plan which will be forwarded to a funding support agency:

1. **Cover sheet outlining:**
   - project name
   - organisation name
   - auspicing agency or group
   - Steering Committee members, including what organisation they are from and the positions they hold on the committee.
2. **Executive Summary**
   - mission and vision
3. **Situational or PEST Analysis**
   - political, economic, sociological, technical issues affecting the project (the need for the project)
4. **Strategic environment: SWOT analysis**
   - strengths and weaknesses (internal)
   - opportunities and threats (external)
5. **Objectives**
6. **Strategies**
7. **Key results areas**
   - priorities and outcomes
8. **Tactical/action plan**
9. **Resource estimate**
10. **Proposed budget**
    - projected income and expenditure
11. **Sensitivity analysis**
    - Consider conservative vs optimistic assumptions
12. **Project review**
    - how the project will be monitored and reviewed
    - how results will be used in the project's management and performance
    - who will be conducting the evaluation and their relevant skills
    - what will be done with the final report
13. **Stakeholder participation**

A checklist to assess readiness for strategic planning and evaluation

The ease with which this strategic planning and evaluation process will be adopted is related to the readiness of your project and its stakeholders. A useful approach for assessing this readiness and for predicting difficulties in implementing the strategic plan is the "A-VICTORY model". This model requires some formal or informal judgement about:

A bility:	Are available staff sufficiently skilled to manage and evaluate the project?
V alues:	Have you identified community needs and values which are likely to affect participation of stakeholders in the project Steering Committee?
I nformation:	Have you gathered useful information to make a good case for the continuation of the project, and to monitor the progress of the project?
C ircumstances:	What are the main political, social, economic and cultural factors and how might they affect the implementation of the project?
T iming:	How is the timing of the project affected by these circumstances? What are the critical steps and by when do they have to be completed?
O bligation:	To whom is the project accountable?
R esistance:	Who or what might be against the project or create unfavourable circumstances?
Y ield:	What are the expected outcomes and longer-term costs and benefits?

This technique can be applied by asking (by oneself or in a group) whether these ingredients are available to your project and by making a judgement about whether these factors are *high* or *low* in their influence on the project's potential to achieve its goals. The more highs you have, the better. The more lows you have, the more difficult it is to get the project evaluated and the lower the likelihood of getting results that can be used in a meaningful manner.

Project Environment—SWOT Analysis

One of the most important preliminary steps in strategic planning is environmental analysis. This is a process which enables the Steering Committee to find out the factors that will have an influence on the project. The results of this process should be part of the project's design, providing important information that can affect the success or failure of the project.

It is important to examine both the internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) environments (see Figure 2 on page 8). Results of the environment analysis should be included in the SWOT analysis section in the strategic planning worksheets (see Worksheet 1 on page 10).

Suggested here are group methods of environmental assessment for both internal and external environments.

The External Environment (Opportunities and Threats)

The external environment includes the following influences:

- Political (government policies vs opposition policies);
- Economic (business, employment options);
- Social (community issues like other non-government agencies and attitudes);
- Technical (like new ideas for creating jobs); and
- External stakeholders of the project.

In order to promote participation, a **nominal group approach** is suggested as a means of starting this consultative process. This technique is suggested for data collection at each stage of information gathering as it has significant advantages (for example, the efficient use of time and control of processes) over traditional focus group methods. It requires about 10 to 24 key external stakeholders and only a few relevant management representatives from the project to meet and act as nominal representatives of the spectrum of opinion. The group process is strongly controlled by the chairperson and should be conducted as follows:

Step 1: Individuals work silently in each other's presence ("brainstorming") for 15 minutes, composing a list of issues and ideas, categorising them according to their perceived impact on the project as potential opportunities or threats.

Step 2: Going around the circle, participants each present their list to the group. These are recorded by the scribe.

Step 3: Once everyone has presented, a whole group discussion is held where agreement should be reached on which items on the lists mean the same thing with different wording and their ranking from the most to the least important.

Step 4: For each item on the list, a quantitative indicator available from the project is allocated as the best measure for assessing its impact on the project.
For example, an employment project might have the local Commonwealth Employment Service office as part of its external environment, hopefully perceived as an opportunity provider. A measure of its impact could be the number of participants referred to the project by the Centrelink office.

Information gained is then incorporated into the strategic planning process. It should be noted that what is learned from this procedure may not only provide the Steering Committee with a clearer picture of what is needed but also of what is not needed. It would be counterproductive to formulate a strategic plan that duplicated services already in place.

The Internal Environment (Strengths and Weaknesses)

The internal environment has to do with the workings of the project itself. It is determined by many things including:

- Available resources (including budget);
- Structure;
- Culture, values and mission; and
- Staff skills and morale.

Following on from the A-VICTORY model, outlined here is one method for examining the internal environment based on the concept of **force field analysis** for organisational diagnosis. The technique has been developed from Kurt Lewin's theory that any organisation is controlled by "fields of forces" which are the main instruments of change.

It is assumed that change occurs by temporary shifts in the balance of these forces. The key step involves identifying the *driving* and *restraining* forces acting on the proposed change within the organisation.

In a project, the Steering Committee can discern which of the restraining forces need to be reduced, while increasing the impact of the driving forces.

This is a subjective method of analysis. The advantage is that it is a "quick and dirty" assessment; the disadvantage is that other stakeholders could see the "forces" as different and/or operating in other directions.

It is suggested that the group undertaking the analysis be comprised of stakeholders from within the project and that participants represent a good cross-section. In other words, you need *management* and *workers* as well as representatives from each area of work responsibility.

Prior to this exercise, the participants may prepare and bring to the meeting a list of any forces for change which have been suggested by their personal view of the environment facing the project.

This process could bring together a large group of people and this should be divided into smaller groups so that the participants are comfortable with each other and so they can be productive together. It is often beneficial to start the small group process by choosing a chairperson and a scribe. This will help focus the involvement of participants on the task of preparing recommendations.

	Positive	Negative
Internal	Strengths	Weaknesses
External	Opportunities	Threats

Figure 2: SWOT Analysis: undertaking an analysis of a project's environment.

Force Field Analysis (FFA)

In order to be as reaslistic as possible, a FFA should refer to a specific measure of output or outcome relevant to the project's goals. The point is to track through what effects these driving and restraining forces could have on the performance of the project.

Questions to be addressed in this process are:

- What forces can work for or against this project in the current environment ?
- On what actions could the stakeholders work together in order to boost the impact of the driving forces while reducing the restraining forces?
- What are the most relevant output/outcome indicators (ie. available data from evaluation) sensitive to these forces? How would project management use these indicators to monitor the impact of the project's strategy on these forces?

Step 1: (Optional) Identify from whose perspective the FFA is to be assessed.
It is possible for force field analysis to be assessed from a number of different perspectives. For example, from the perspective of an external stakeholder, from the perspective of a person who will participate in the project or from the perspective of the Steering Committee. It is recommended here that you approach it from the perspective of the Steering Committee but you may wish to formally clarify this issue with the group. For this reason, it has been indicated that Step one is optional.

Step 2: Give participants ten minutes to individually (preferably in silence) identify potential driving forces and restraining forces in the current environment as they are likely to affect your project. Participants should complete worksheet 2.

Step 3: Give participants another five minutes to review these forces by rating their current impact on your project based on the following five point scale:

1 almost no effect currently
2 relatively little effect currently
3 moderate effect currently
4 important effect currently
5 major effect currently

Step 4: Give participants 15 minutes to complete worksheet 3 which shows how these forces impact on the project. Instruct them to draw a line from the rated level of impact (step three) to the status quo line, representing the current situation (if you want, a key word can supplement the labels a–A, for the forces identified above).

Step 5: Participants briefly (no more than one minute each) share their ratings with the whole group. The scribe records the higher rating driving and restraining forces from each participant.
Participants continue reporting their main forces in a round-robin fashion. This should be done without critical comment or comparison.

Step 6: A group discussion follows which will identify common driving and restraining forces working on their particular areas of the project. Discussion should focus on the questions outlined in the beginning of this section.

Step 7: If there is more than one group, the scribe should prepare a single page of butchers paper showing the forces in common across the group which will be presented to a whole group session.

Step 8: If required (refer step seven), a whole group session is held where the scribe from each group has five minutes to report on their respective group's activity. The whole group chair has the job of bringing all these aspects together by repeating the process outlined in step seven.

Strategic Planning

Project Name: _____

Auspicing Agency or Group: _____

Steering Committee Chair: _____

Purpose of the Project: _____

_____

Current Situation (Targets)

Stakeholders: _____

_____

_____

Stakeholder Priority Needs _____

_____

_____

SWOT Analysis

Strengths _____

_____

Weaknesses _____

_____

Opportunities _____

_____

Threats _____

_____

Worksheet 1

Force Field Analysis

List the main **driving** forces below:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

List the main **restraining** forces below

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

Worksheet 2

This worksheet guide is modelled on Professor Kurt Lewin's force-field analysis developed by others like Harvey & Brown (1996). See also Montanari, et al. (1990) and Milton, et al. (1984).

Force Field Analysis—Field of Forces

Restraining Forces

5 a b c d e f g h i

4

3

2

1

Status Quo on performance indicator

1

2

3

4

5 A B C D E F G H I

Driving Forces

Worksheet 3

TARGETS

A needs assessment identifies the extent and type of existing problems in the community, the services available, and the unmet needs. A needs assessment is a process to determine the expectations and concerns about equity and social justice for clients or stakeholders or service recipients which can be defined as the gap between the problem and existing efforts, resources, and projects to deal with the need. Such an assessment is an important first stage in planning a project and preparing for an evaluation.

The nominal group approach is suggested. This technique is designed to assist group members to clarify the needs of the stakeholders who they nominally represent.

Convene a half-day consultative meeting of stakeholder representatives which should be conducted using the following steps:

Step 1: Each member privately writes down their ideas of the needs they see for the clients of the project.

Step 2: Each member shares their ideas with the group in a round-robin fashion for at least three circuits until the group is repeating or running out of ideas.

At this stage there is no critical comment or comparison of ideas. Each idea is recorded on butcher's paper by the scribe.

Step 3: Now the ideas are compared and a summarised list of as many common elements and key issues as is necessary to gain agreement in the time available.

Step 4: Each participant ranks the needs in order of importance, relative to their interests, on butchers paper, for the group to see.

- It is not likely that equal attention will be needed or can be given to all areas.
- To keep the process simple but moving steadily toward the desired outcome, the importance of each need is considered without regard to current resource levels.
- Needs are categorised as being of high, moderate, or low importance of practical outcomes or intended benefits.

Step 4: For each of the needs identified, assess the level of resources required to enable the desired outcomes to be achieved.

- The information should come from the best available source so it will have the best chance of being accurate and acceptable to the participants.
- The resource level for each need is categorised as high, moderate, or low.

Step 5: Assess the level of resources required for each of the needs identified above to enable the desired outcome identified. The data should come from the best available source. A general rule of thumb is to use those available sources of information which stand the best chance of being accurate and are acceptable to the participants (and other stakeholders). The resource level for each is categorised as high, moderate or low.

Step 6: Establish a priority for each need (and potential outcome), considering both outcome importance and resources.

The table in Figure 3 is useful to facilitate this process. Each need is placed in one of the nine cells. Priorities are established, high to low, from the upper left to the lower right with cell number one being top priority. Cells numbered two have second priority; cells numbered three are third; with cells four and five having least priority. The lower the number, the more likely the need and outcome will be implemented. Worksheet 4 on page 17 provides a guide to assist the project in specifying aims, goals and outcomes.

Figure 3 is based on the following premises:

- The findings of a needs assessment, in order to be useful, must be prioritised.
- Practicality of outcomes and resource levels are equally important in determining priorities.
- Information is not useful unless the people receiving the information understand, accept and can act upon it.

It is now possible to place the needs analysis in the context of the project. In theory, these steps can be carried out by external "experts", based on their knowledge and experience. However, it is more likely to have credibility with stakeholders if they are directly represented in the process.

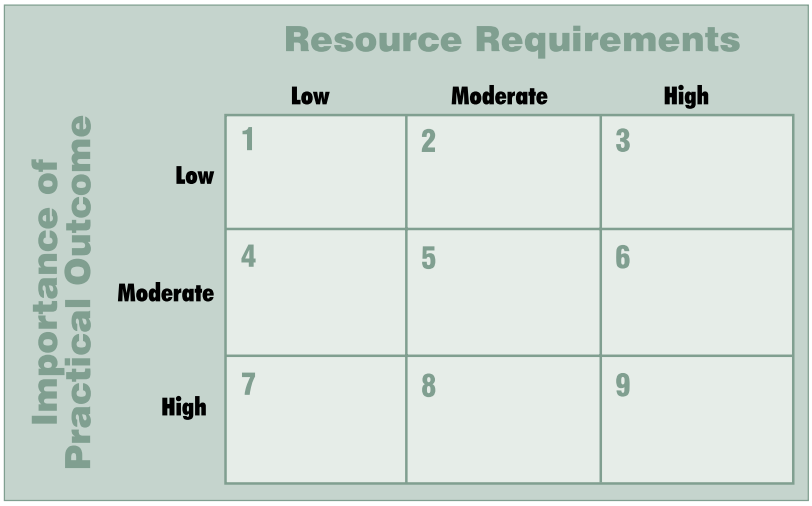

Figure 3: Establishing priorities. Source: Isaac and Michael 1981

AIMS

Identifying Aims, Goals and Outcomes

The goal setting and clarifying process may have been done as part of the strategic planning for the project. However, it can also be undertaken at a later stage, particularly if the evaluation process is begun late in the life of a project. Either way, it is essential to refocus on the original aims of the project developed during the planning phase.

Obtaining Measurable Outcomes

Outcomes are the crux of the management and evaluation of projects. In order to develop a useful structure for the information to be reported by the Steering Committee, questions which would need to be asked include:

- What are the types of results likely with this type of service and how are they to be monitored?
- What are the images of the “best case” and “worst case” outcomes in terms of effects on the clients? How do these scenarios differ, how are they related? What variables underlie the similarities and differences?
- Can we measure the performance of the project?
- What level is acceptable for the “best” and what level for the “worst” performance? Under what conditions are these expected?
- What is an acceptable or desirable target performance for this project or for the clients?
- Who has to use this information or who will judge what is the acceptable level of performance?
- How will the relevant information be collected and by whom?
- How can the information be interpreted? What does it mean in relation to the original intentions of the project?
- How can the information be reported in a meaningful manner to assist decision making?
- How are the results to be used to improve the performance of the program?

Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS)

When planning a project it is important to clearly outline expected or desired outcomes in objective terms that everyone agrees upon and anyone can check as they are achieved.

Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS), another group technique, is suggested. This technique aims to bring together all key stakeholders, especially staff and participants,to agree upon expected, desirable and undesirable outcomes of the project (see Figure 4).

This group technique facilitates the process of clearly documenting the likely acceptable and less than acceptable expected results. When the project is completed the Steering Committee will have a common basis for estimating the project's costs, benefits and general effects.

Goal Attainment Scaling can be applied to complicated goals and indicators, such as the appropriateness and quality of service. Anything the project needs to know on a regular basis, and that the stakeholders can state clearly and agree on, can be monitored by the GAS method.

Having spent time developing goals and outcome measures, it is important to continually review them in the context of the project's cycle of planning and operations.

It may be advisable for goal statements to be periodically monitored by a third party to ensure as little bias as possible. A number of goals can be included in one form and weightings can be applied if appropriate differences in emphasis can be justified to all stakeholders. The ratings can be analysed qualitatively or quantitatively giving a GAS index or percentage of goals attained.

Level of expected outcome	Rating	Behaviour statement of expected outcome
Much more than expected	+2	
More than expected	+1	
Expected outcome	0	
Less than expected	-1	
Much less than expected	-2	

Figure 4: Goal Attainment Scaling Source: Kiresuk and Lund 1978

Aims

Part A: Make a list of the primary goals of the project.

Ask yourself: "What are we trying to accomplish?"

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part B: What groups do you want to involve?

Ask yourself: "Who are we trying to reach?"

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part C: What outcomes are desired?

Ask yourself: "As a result of this project, how would we like the participants to change? What would they learn? What attitudes, feelings or behaviour would be different?"

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Worksheet 4

Source: Linney and Wandersman (1991) page 41.

REVIEW

Outcome Monitoring

In order to review a project, as well as promote learning and sharing, it is important to gather relevant information about the situation faced by a project's target group before, during and after the project.

Project Logic and Evaluation

Option 1: Single Group, After Project Assessment Design

This option collects outcome and impact information only after the project is completed. However, conclusions about project effectiveness often require evidence that participants' responses have changed as a result of the project or in comparison to a similar group not receiving the service provided by the project. (See Figure 5.)

Questions to consider:

- What did this group look like before the project (for example, age, sex, risk factors)?
- What was the score before the project?
- Is the project group exposed to any influence other than the project's activities that might affect the after-project test scores?
- How does this affect the outcome?

Qualitative/Quantitative Data

Various approaches exist for the collection of qualitative data (eg. Caulley, 1994a) and quantitative data (eg., De Costa, 1994).

Here it is intended only to recommend that projects gather the basic data necessary to be able to justify and focus the project on:

- participant needs (qualitative data),
- outcomes for participants (qualitative and quantitative data), and
- attitudes or satisfactions of stakeholders (qualitative and/or quantitative data).

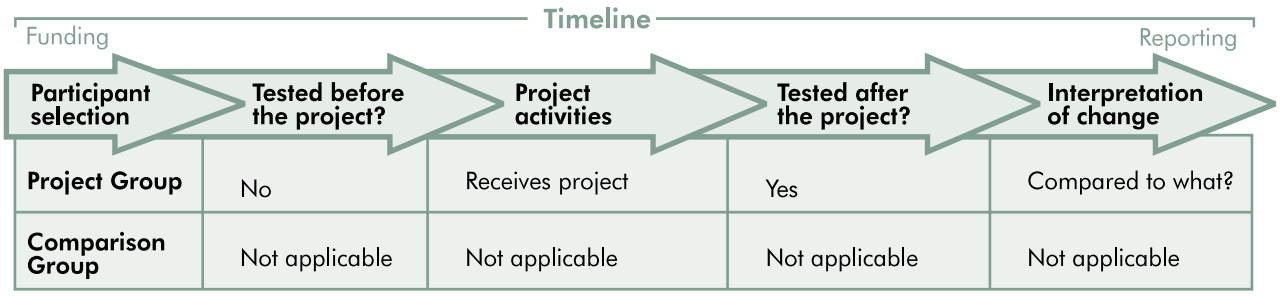

Figure 5: Single group, after project assessment design.

Option 2: Single Group Before/After Project Assessment Design

This option documents participant change over the duration of the project more clearly. However, the possibility exists that the participants' responses changed for some reason other than the activities of the project. (See Figure 6.)

Questions to Consider:

- What did this group look like before the project (for example, age, sex, risk factors)?
- Is the project group exposed to any influence other than the project's activities that might affect the after-project test scores?
- How do these affect the outcome?
- Did the project go as designed?
- Are there before/after differences?
- If so, do these differences reflect project effects or outside influences?

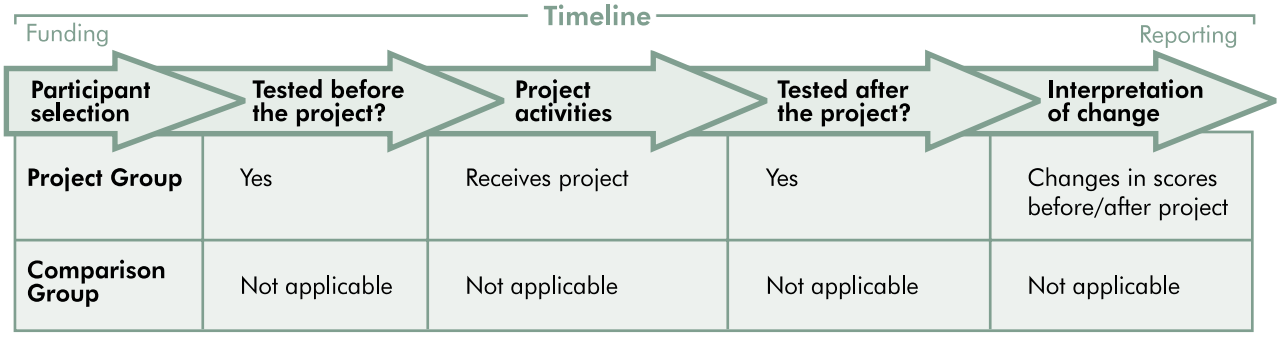

Figure 6: Single group, after project assessment design.

Option 3: Comparison Group After Project Assessment Design

This option adds a similar group of participants not involved in the project to provide a comparison with the project participants. This makes it more valid to say that in comparison to a group not participating in the project, the participants in the project achieved the desired outcomes. However, no evidence that participants have actually changed their responses over the duration of the project is possible. If the project and the comparison groups were different before the project, the evaluation could draw inaccurate conclusions about the project's effectiveness. (See Figure 7.)

Questions to Consider:

- Can we assume the groups are comparable?
- Do both groups come from the "targeted" recipients for which the project was intended?
- Do they represent the people we wanted to reach (for example, from a high-risk environment)?
- Is the project group treated differently from the comparison group in addition to experiencing project activities (for example, has the attention alone made a difference)?
- Did the project go as designed?
- Are there real differences between the groups? If so, do the differences reflect project effects or outside influences?

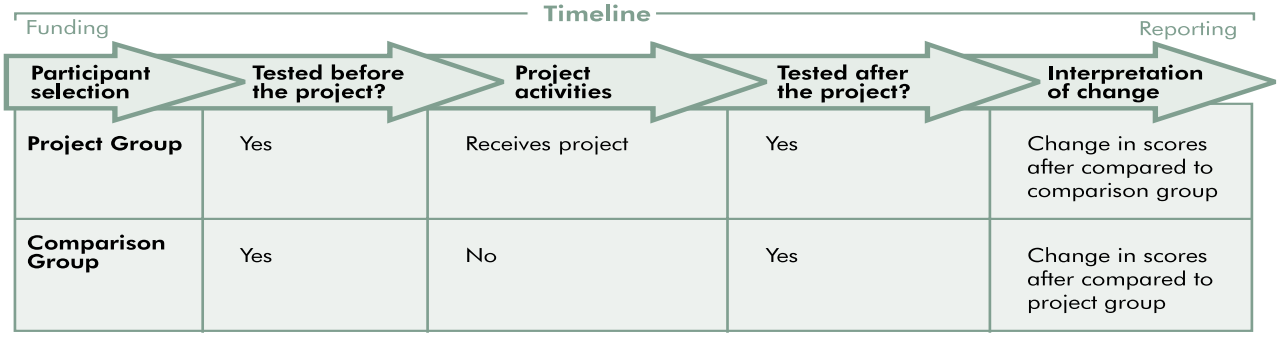

Figure 7: Comparison group after project assesssment design

Option 4: Comparison Group Before/After Project Assessment Design

This option includes the advantages of before and after project assessment with the advantages of using a comparison group. Clear statements can be made about changes in responses over time and about attributing the change to the project intervention. (See Figure 8.)

Questions to Consider:

- Can we assume the groups are comparable (same target group)?
- Is the project group treated differently from the comparison group in addition to experiencing project activities (for example, has the attention alone made a difference)?
- Did the project actually occur?
- Are there real differences between the groups? If so, do the differences reflect project effects or outside influences?

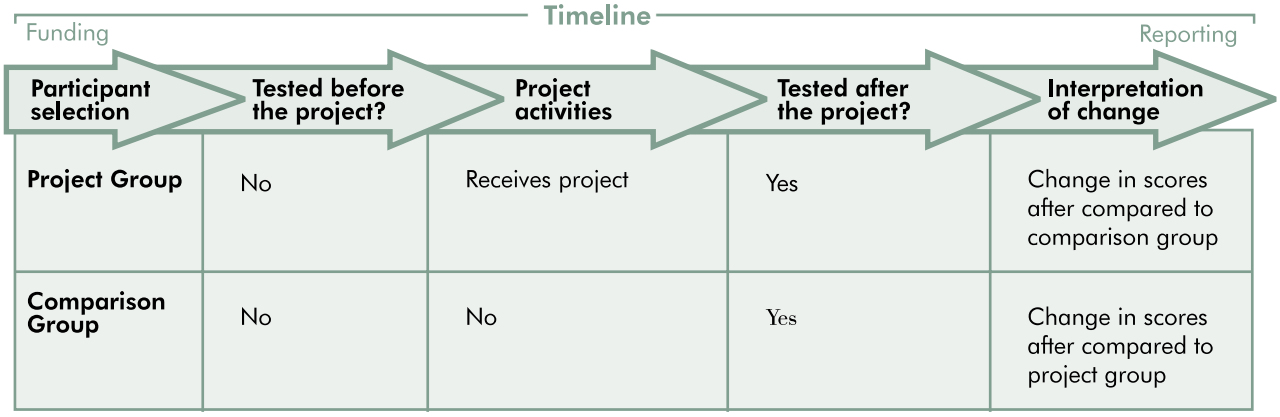

Figure 8: Comparison group before/after project assesssment design

[Source of models: Linney and Wandersman 1991, pages 10 – 13]

Strategic Evaluation Form

Goal: _____

Strategy: _____
_____
_____

Activity: _____
_____
_____

Timeline: _____
_____
_____

Performance Measure: _____
_____
_____

Goal: _____

Strategy: _____
_____
_____

Activity: _____
_____
_____

Timeline: _____
_____
_____

Performance Measure: _____
_____
_____

Worksheet 5

Outcome Monitoring

Desired Outcomes	Measure/ Indicator Indicate the evidence you have for each outcome- eg existing files from participants	Observed Scores (check "none" if you did not collect data					Amount of change	
		Project Group			Comparison Group		Before vs after the project	Comparison vs project group
		None	Before	After	Before	After		

Source: Linney and Wandersman, 1991

Worksheet 6

Best-Liked/Least-Liked Group Exercise

The three things you **best liked** about this project are:

1. _____

_____

_____

2. _____

_____

_____

3. _____

_____

_____

The three things you **least liked** about this project are:

1. _____

_____

_____

2. _____

_____

_____

3. _____

_____

_____

Source: Slotnick, 1982

Worksheet 7

Assessing Satisfaction

In order to assess the satisfaction of the participants with the project, two methods are recommended:

1. group consultation; or
2. survey using simple questionnaires.

The best results would be obtained by combining these methods, by, for example, distributing a survey to participants as they exit the project, and then following up by conducting a group consultation one or two months later to assess the impact of the project in that time.

1. Group Assessment of Satisfaction: "Best-Liked\Least-Liked" Technique

The nominal group approach can be modified to suit the gathering of data about the satisfaction of stakeholders of a project. As is typical of the nominal group exercise, participants should be given about ten minutes thinking and writing (off the top of their head), then they are asked to share their comments (without justification).

Step 1: Participants should introduce themselves by stating their name, where they are from (location), which group they are representing and why.

Step 2: Worksheet 7 can be used for participants to write notes (privately) on:

- what they experienced in dealing with the project;
- three things they best-liked about the project; and
- three things they least-liked about the project.

These pages should be kept on-hand until after the session to prompt them during the group discussion.

A break provides an opportunity to tidy up the notes and assists the progression of the meeting by giving participants time to change the "hat they are wearing" from individual stakeholder to group member.

Step 3: Participants share their comments about the best-liked items in a round-robin fashion amongst the group.

Step 4: The Chair facilitates a general discussion of priority items to summarise the key points learned and the main points into key things best-liked.

Step 5: Summarise the responses in reasonable, but brief terms, with a letter as the code which can be used to identify the issues. A number of responses, while using different words, will address the same issue.

Step 6: Count the number of times each code occurs, to find out which were the most common and so probably the most important items. These are then re-listed starting with the code that has the most number of responses, then the next most frequent and so on down the list.

Step 7: Repeat Steps three, four and five with the least-liked responses.

Step 8: The evaluation can now be brought to the point by comparing the best liked and worst liked aspects of the project under review.

Step 9: Quantitative analysis can be done (optional).

2. Individual Assessment of Satisfaction: Survey Techniques

To assess the reactions of individuals, it is usual to conduct an interview or survey by questionnaire. A survey can be conducted in a number of ways, depending upon the type of information that is being gathered. Questionnaires are recommended here as a useful method to assess the reactions of individuals to the project.

Questionnaires can be completed in one of two ways:
- Forms are posted or handed to stakeholders for completion and return.
- Stakeholders are interviewed and forms completed by the interviewer.

Preparing a Questionnaire

There are many guides to preparing questionnaires. Here we can only highlight some common methods and pitfalls.

- When planning your questionnaire think about what you will do with the answers given. You should draw-up the sorts of tables that you might use to summarise the findings and see what questions you have to ask to get the numbers to fill in the table. This is also useful in terms of planning the report on the survey data.
- Consider how many responses you will need to ensure sufficient data for analysis. In general, you will need at least ten responses per cell in your table ("data matrix"). For example, if you have two columns and three rows (a two by three matrix), crudely you will need at least 60 people responding to give the statistics a chance to do their job.
- Some form of questionnaire or interview form is a useful tool to help focus the gathering of relevant data.
- Who responds to the questionnaire has a bearing on the design of the form-layout, explanations, wording of questions, and whether to mail out the questionnaire or interview.
- Reasoning backwards in the design phase saves time and ensures you have the correct information for the analysis.

Stakeholder-Completed Forms

When using this method, survey respondents must be guided to ensure that all the necessary information is obtained. The questionnaire must include:

- **A covering letter:** to explain why it is important to respond and to seek the potential respondent's permission
- **Explanatory notes:** to show how to complete each type of question. For example, conventional abbreviations such as M/F to represent male/female and Y/N for yes/no. Keep in mind the following:
- **Multiple response questions:** spell out the maximum number of responses required;
- **Choice of one only response:** spell out that only one response is required;
- Give examples on how the form is to be filled out (for example, the type of tick or cross required); and
- Ensure these instructions prior to the form itself are not too long.
- If the survey is to be completed by a young person, then get some young people to test it.
- If you are mailing out a survey, try to send out at least three times more questionnaires as you need responses.

Interviewer-Completed Forms

The training required for effective and accurate interview surveys often deters people from using this method.

If you are able to recruit experienced interviewers, it is worth taking time to involve them in the design of the study. This way, they can assist in the preparation of coding, explain the questionnaire, the coding key and how it is to be used.

Inexperienced interviewers may need more instruction and it would be wise to keep any explanation or involvement as simple as possible to avoid confusion.

It is advisable to get interviewers to trial the questionnaire with someone (preferably not involved in the project) and then try the coding on that preliminary data before they go out to conduct the survey.

Again some professional researchers find it advisable to prepare the report, tables and trial layouts before designing the survey and briefing the interviewers.

It is better to catch people in the context of the questions. So, when asking questions about the project's activities, it would be better to speak to them where these take place, rather than an interviewer going to their homes.

Guidelines for Developing a Questionnaire

1. Main Types of Survey Questions

The three main types of questions likely to be asked require different methods of specification of responses.

(a) *Factual information*: for example, age, place of residence, etc.
When asking respondents to provide quantitative estimates, it is preferable to:

- Specify particular values rather than ranges
- To state options in numeric values for example, "less than one month" would be better than using "often to never".

(b) *Opinion*: for example, "often" to "never", "desirable" to "undesirable".

(c) *Preferences*: The most likely methods to use are a rating, ranking or visual analogue scale.

2. Multiple Fixed Response Questions

A multiple choice question format is suitable when:

- It is possible to give a *yes* or *no* to each possible category;
- There is a sequence of codes, for example, 30 categories but only allowed five answers;
- Where there is some evidence to suggest the main possible responses;
- All of the alternatives above; or
- When you include an *other* category (with instructions to specify in the space below).
- Multiple choice questions are difficult for the respondents if there are no clear alternatives.

3. Open-Ended Questions and Free-Response Formats

When using fixed alternative response categories, it helps to allow respondents the freedom to choose their own wording by providing an *other* category. When coding such *other* responses it is best to do a quick review of the answers to identify the main concepts respondents have used to see if new categories can be established. Then recode those *others* as numbered categories accordingly.

Be wary that a free response format might unintentionally include a *closed* question like "Did this show an improvement?" Such a question is limiting in the responses available even though no alternatives are actually stated. This may result in an answer "yes" or "no" which may not help you answer the underlying issue of your research question. So it is useful to follow-up open-ended questions with a further prompt for clarification. Also be careful because open-ended questions are expensive to analyse (see below).

4. Form Layout

Forms should have as few pages and questions as possible—the less formidable the better. Where possible, allow plenty of space for the respondent to write on the form.

It is essential that each form is given identification (top page may be numbered) even if they are confidential. It may be necessary to refer to a particular form later when checking data being entered for statistical analysis.

To overcome any suspicion, it is wise to explain to respondents that the questionnaire is using their postcode (or some such distinguishing demographic indicator) as a method to check on the number and representativeness of the respondents.

If it is necessary to go beyond a page, ensure that each page-break is placed at the end of a section or where the content determines.

It is preferable not to print pages of questionnaires back-to- back because of the inconvenience of having to turn over the page when coding and entering large amounts of data into a computer. This also allows respondents extra space to write on the back of the page. Think of the path for the person entering the data into the computer to avoid their eyes having to dart about the page. Consider how much further coding will be necessary because it adds significantly to costs.

Preparing Responses for Analysis

“How to make sense of the analyses” is too big an issue for this manual. However, some guidelines are included here to provide direction.

Text books on statistics can give examples of typical business applications. Also, computer packages often help to put the information into some order. And so, with a little understanding of the type of data and the help of a suitable computer package, it is possible to make some sense of the data.

Coding the Responses

Who should code raw responses, when and how? These are very important theoretical problems. The best people to seek for advice are sociologists and methodology experts. Basically everyone agrees that people have to be given some summary of the masses of information that is usually collected in an evaluation study. Sociologists depend heavily on coding the qualitative (quotes, etc.) responses to make their data amendable to interpretation, but they take very seriously the inherent biases which researchers have about their pet field.

Sociologists and some psychologists argue that we bring to bear our own view of the world and our expectations of the appropriateness of options which we think are reasonable. These views will influence the degree and direction of the coding of raw data. This has an effect on what words we choose in coding or the rewording and reducing of answers of respondents to questions, and/or the record of an observation of behaviour of the subject(s). The main point is for the Steering Committee to check on the way the data are being handled, to ensure all agree with the approach to any coding.

Coding Techniques

There are two main approaches to coding of responses:

1. **Pre-planned:** this approach supposedly makes the researchers’ biases open from the start, BUT tries to get the respondents to reduce the complexity of the information to the immediate interest of the researchers;

2. **Post-analysed codings:** this approach allow the researchers to find out more about the full range of options which respondents may demonstrate, BUT also leaves the researchers open to suggestions that they have been biased in the way they have summarised the responses to make the information more palatable.

Pre-planned approaches tend to be used in more established and/or scientifically based research with a lot of indicators around to lead to reasonable hypotheses to guide the study. Post-analysis coding tends to occur more with novel exploratory investigations, where researchers want to ensure maximum opportunity to generate new information.

Using a Consultant for Analysis

The larger the size of the questionnaire or the bigger the number of respondents, the more likely it is that you will have to turn the data over to an expert for computer analysis, particularly if your own staff resources are limited.

If it is necessary to use a data entry expert, it is useful to follow these hints:

- Use pre-numbered boxes as much as possible for identifying each alternative answer so that the person typing in responses (sometimes called a Data Processing Operator or DPO) can enter the responses straight off the questionnaire. Again, for the ease of the typist, always code the most frequent case “1” and put at the top of the list the alternatives offered to the respondent (unless you wish to mix the order of alternative responses to allow for a response bias of the respondent).

- Open-ended questions mean you have to re-code data which is time consuming and leads to more biases. Not all open-ended questions need to be coded, but if they are important then you could get them typed to assist in identifying the most common response types

- It is preferable to have answers expressed as numeric values rather than alpha-numeric values because it is easier for most statistics packages to handle.

- For example, use dates wherever possible. If you have the option between date of birth and age, use the former. If you are doing a longitudinal study you will need to code by the date of birth.

- Various number codes are used by convention:
    - “other” category = 9 or 99; 0 = unknown
    - Male = 1 Female = 2
    - Where a binomial analysis 1 = event, 0 = non-event
    - 9 or 99 generally used for “unknown”
    - A “-” (blank) is often used for missing values
    - “Not applicable”: code as unknown
    - “non-response” (i.e., questionnaire not returned): record in the control set but not in the data file.
    - Existing Codes: Where available use existing code, e.g., International codes. If existing codes are too crude, re-code into sub-categories.

Analysing the Information

There are two types of statistical analysis: descriptive and analytical (or “inferential”).

1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are summary descriptions of the “raw” data. Available methods include:

- Tables of data with an average (mean, median or mode). Ensure tables are properly labelled and explained in the text of the report.
- Graphs such as frequency distributions or histograms of grouped data, and pie-charts showing percentages. Ensure appropriate conventions are followed (such as avoiding distortion in the areas under graphs and the labelling of the scales in any diagram).
- Measures of “dispersion” such as the range, standard deviation or variance which complement indexes of “central tendency” (methods of calculating an average).

2. Inferential or Analytical Statistics

What can you infer from the information produced by the project evaluation? How can you analyse the bulk and find the valuable information?

Analysis of data is probably the most difficult job of the project worker. The clarity of the findings depends on the adequacy of the methods of analysis. There is no set method of determining the best type of statistic to use. Much depends on knowing what type of data you have and what kinds of decisions are needed from it.

Participant Satisfaction Questionnaire

Please tick the relevant box and fill in the open sections with your comments.

1. Overall, how would you rate the project you have just been participating in?
   - ☐ 1. excellent
   - ☐ 2. very good
   - ☐ 3. satisfactory
   - ☐ 4. fair
   - ☐ 5. poor

   Why? Any Comments?

_____

2. How useful was this activity?
   - ☐ 1. very useful
   - ☐ 2. somewhat useful
   - ☐ 3. not useful

   Why? Any comments?

_____

3. How well did this activity match your expectations?
   - ☐ 1. very well
   - ☐ 2. somewhat
   - ☐ 3. not at all

   Why? Any comments?

_____

4. What should be done to improve the activity for the future?

_____

_____

_____

5. Please make any other suggestions or comments you think would be helpful for future planning.

_____

_____

_____

Optional:

I would ☐ / I would not ☐ be available to be interviewed in a follow-up study later.

(if you would, please give us your name to contact you later):

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Please return to:

Sample 1

Source: Linney and Wandersman (1991)

Participant's Project Evaluation Questionnaire

We would like your comments about the activity/session you attended today. Please circle the relevant option which describes how you think about the session you attended, and fill out the open "Any comments" parts of the questionnaire as completely and honestly as possible.

1. How would you rate the quality of the activity you attended today?

5	4	3	2	1
excellent	very good	good	fair	poor

Why? Any comments?

_____

_____

2. Was the material presented in an organised way?

5	4	3	2	1
yes, definitely	mostly	frequently	some	not at all

Why? Any comments?

_____

_____

3. Was the material interesting to you?

5	4	3	2	1
very interesting				not very interesting

Why? Any comments?

_____

_____

4. Did the presenter(s) stimulate your interest in the material?

5	4	3	2	1
yes, definitely				no, not at all

Why? Any comments?

_____

_____

Sample 2

Source: Linney and Wandersman (1991)

5. Was the material relevant to your needs?

5 4 3 2 1
very relevant not at all relevant

Why? Any comments?

_____

_____

6. How much did you learn from the session?

5 4 3 2 1
a great deal nothing

Why? Any comments?

_____

_____

7. How useful would you say the material in the project will be to you in the future?

5 4 3 2 1
extremely useful not at all useful

Why? Any comments?

_____

_____

8. The three things I liked best about the session are:

_____

_____

_____

9. The three aspects of this session most in need of improvement are:

_____

_____

_____

Sample 2

Source: Linney and Wandersman (1991)

Sample: Participants' Self-Esteem Questionnaire

How would you describe yourself on the following characteristics?
For each description, put a tick (✓) in the column that best describes you.

Description	Very much like me	Pretty much like me	Not much like me	Not like me
confident				
unreliable				
happy				
easy-going				
moody				
friendly				
easily angered				
makes friends easily				
gets along with teachers				
responsible				
intelligent				
lazy				
forgetful				
attractive				
punctual				
generous				
helpful				
uncooperative				
shy				
open minded				
a leader				

Source: Adolescent Diversion Project, Department of Psychology, Michigan State University

Sample 3

Instructions for Self-Esteem Questionnaire

(Not for inclusion on the form):

Score this self-esteem measure by assigning a 4 to the most positive descriptive category, a 3 to the next most positive, a 2 to the next, and a 1 to the least positive.

For example, on the characteristic “confident”, if the student ticked “very much like me”, she would get a 4; if she ticked “not much like me”, she would get a 2.

Add the scores for each item to get a total score for self-esteem.

If the participant’s scores add to 21-30 this may be a sign of low self-esteem (or negative response bias).

If the participant’s scores add up to over 80 they may be playing or have a tendency to fake a “good” response (this is called a positive response bias).

The key to interpreting these scores is to ask the participant why his or her scores were this way? Discuss the way they felt about themselves in general and regarding this project. Keep confidential notes if you think there is some information relevant to the evaluation of the project.

GROUP PROCESSES

Organisational and Practical Suggestions

1. Venue: Ensure the venue is of an adequate size for the invited group, lighting and room temperature are appropriate and that participants will not be disturbed during the process. Make sure participants know how to find the venue.
2. Attendance record: Prior to the commencement of the group process, ensure that each participant has recorded their name, telephone and fax numbers, organisation or group they are representing (if appropriate) and any other information relevant to the purpose of the group.
3. Introductions: Once they are seated, each participant briefly (no more than two minutes) introduces themselves to the group. It is a good idea as well to have name tags. Hand-written sticky labels will suffice.
4. Equipment: Prior to the participants arriving, ensure all the equipment you require is available and in working order. Depending on the process that will be facilitated, you may require such things as an overhead projector, whiteboard, butcher's paper and stand, pens and paper. Ensure, also, that you have more than enough copies of any worksheets that will be used.
5. Invitations: You may wish to make this a formal process by issuing written invitations. However, verbal invitations may suffice. Whichever method you choose, ensure that everyone knows the date, time, venue of the meeting and how long it will take. This is the time to state the purpose of the meeting so each person knows why they have been invited.
6. Seating: Ensure the arrangement of the seats promotes group discussion. Seats arranged in a circle are better for this than theatre style. Make sure, as well, that you have enough seats and some extra availabe, just in case. If some people do not attend, it's a good idea to remove the vacant seats from the circle otherwise they could become a barrier between participants.
7. Group Size: The principles of group dynamics suggest that a maximum, effective group size is fifteen. If you bring together more than 15 people, divide the whole group into smaller groups to facilitate achievement of the meeting's purpose.
8. Timing: Ensure the meeting starts and finishes on time.
9. Pre-meeting work: If participants are required to read material or do some work prior to the meeting, ensure that they receive the information in plenty of time for it to be done. Be wary, however, of forwarding information too early as some participants will put it aside and forget about it!

Suggestions for Conducting A Group Consultation Process

1. Scribe:

Participants should elect one person as scribe who will keep a record of the discussions. This is done usually on butcher's paper positioned where each person can see what is being written.
It is important for the participants to agree that the notes are an accurate, although not a word-for-word, record of the discussions. Failure to gain this agreement could mean that the conclusions are questioned at some later date.

2. Chair:

The role of the chairperson is to conduct the meeting, ensuring that the participants remain focussed on the meeting's purpose and that it is achieved within the time that has been allocated.
As chair, keep in mind the following:

- before the discussions formally begin reiterate the purpose of the meeting so the participants know why they are there;
- clarify at the beginning what the group is and what it is not, for instance if it is a nominal group process, make sure participants understand that they are not elected representatives;
- encourage participants to be involved and to ask questions;
- direct discussions so that it remains focussed on the purpose;
- be conscious of the person(s) who will dominate or disrupt the group and the person(s) who will let them. Each participant must have an opportunity to present their opinions; and
- ensure each participant knows how to do what is being asked of them.

3. Opinions:

Vigorous discussion, where appropriate, is to be encouraged but each participant must be able to present their opinions to the group without critical comment or comparison.

How Much Success is Enough?

One of the most difficult questions in evaluation is: “how much is enough change for the project to be considered successful?” There is no easy or definite answer to this question. Once you have examined the amount of change and the overall level of the outcome measure, you can use statistical data analysis to determine whether the change is greater than what would be expected by chance. These procedures can be complicated and may not be possible given the facilities and resources of many projects.

In the early stages of project development, be realistic about the level of change that you can expect:

- Do not be discouraged if there is only a small amount of change on the outcomes and impact indicators.
- Re-examine the project to look for ways that it can be improved and think through how the project activities might be affecting the outcomes you are studying.
- Consultation with a statistician may help you gain a more precise interpretation.
- What is important is that you report your findings to encourage learning and sharing.

Ethics and Rights of Stakeholders

Every evaluation should consider the issues of informed consent and confidentiality in collecting information from individuals.Most government departments and funding bodies, like the Foundation, will already have policies in these areas, and you should become familiar with the relevant policies. The Australian Youth Foundation suggests that any evaluation should conform to the Australasian Evaluation Society code of ethics. Here we will briefly review some important considerations.

Confidentiality

The information collected for an evaluation may be sensitive and personal. Some people are reluctant to speak out if they think they can be identified or they may be suspicious about how the information will be used.

Therefore, it is important to ensure that no information is released about an individual without their written approval. Project staff must ensure that all personal information obtained is handled in accord with the privacy principles set out in Section 14 of the Privacy Act 1988. By safeguarding the identity of your project stakeholders you are protecting their rights and more people are likely to respond and give accurate information.

This does not have to be a cloak and dagger operation. One way is to use codes rather than names to identify individual participants.

Informed Consent

Informed consent involves ensuring that participants clearly understand:

- What the study is about;
- How information will be used (including confidentiality);
- What risks, from the participant's point of view, are involved in taking part in the study; and
- That they do not have to participate if they don't want to or if they are not sure how it will affect them.

The following issues should also be considered:

- For participants with limited literacy skills, verbal explanations will be necessary.
- For participants (or parents/guardians) with limited proficiency in English, explanations in their first language may be necessary.
- When dealing with people in groups make sure there is no ridicule or embarrassment for those who choose not to participate.

When collecting information from a person who is a minor, be aware of the following:

- The role of parental/guardian consent in addition to the participant's consent;
- Consent policies of external stakeholders such as schools and agencies; and
- Knowledge of project's confidentiality policy by all project staff and consultants.

If participation in the project's activities requires written consent, it may not be necessary to get the consent to participate in the evaluation in writing. It may be sufficient to add a clause to the project consent form about consent to participate in the evaluation (passive informed consent).

Prior to anyone participating in the evaluation, issues of consent must be finalised. Be aware that peer/group pressure may be exerted for a person to participate or not participate in the evaluation.

Accurate records should be kept of:

- Which participants have given consent to be included in the evaluation; and
- Whether the consent is passive or written.

Such records will enable staff to know which participants should be followed up.

Keep in mind that passive informed consent can leave the project open to uncertainty and possible complaints if anything goes wrong. Confidentiality, risk, sensitivity of information, and local situation and policies should guide your decision.

Sample Informed Consent Form: Parent/guardian

Dear Parent/guardian,

Your son/daughter *(name)* has been selected to participate in the *(project name)* and its evaluation. The project is designed to *(brief aims of project)*.

The project involves *(X)* for your son/daughter.

As part of the assessment, we need your help in two areas.

1. We need you to give us permission for your son or daughter to participate in this project. This will involve completing the form attached.

2. We would like your permission to access your son/daughter's grades, school attend ance, and discipline record from his/her file at school. We are hoping that the project will improve (X), but we need to check that information from the files. We will collect this information again after your child completes the project, and also (X) months after that in order to evaluate the effects of the project.

All information will be kept totally confidential. Your child's school records will be kept in a locked file in our office, and no one except project staff will see them. Your child will not be identified or singled out in any report or presentation of the results of this assessment.

Thank you in advance for your help with this important project. If you have questions or would like more information about the project please contact one of us care of (Address of project Steering Committee)

Sincerely

Chair;
(Name of Project)
Steering Committee

Please sign here and return to the address above in the envelope provided

I, *(Parent or guardian's name)* agree to my son/daughter *(name)* to:
(circle number preceding selections to which you agree)

1. participate in the *(Project name)*
2. allow access to the relevant school files held on him/her at *(school name)*

I have read and understood the information and have received a copy of this form.

Signed: _____ (Parent or guardian)

Date: _____

Sample 4

Source: Linney and Wandersman (1991)

Sample Informed Consent Form: Participant

Dear *(participant's name)*,

You have been selected to participate in the *(project name)*. The project is designed to help *(brief outline of project aims)*. The program is *(X)* weeks long, and involves *(X)*.

At the beginning and end of the project you will be asked to answer some questions about your feelings and attitudes on various things to do with this project. After the project we will get in touch with you again and ask you to fill out one more questionnaire. The questionnaires will ask you about your attitudes and feelings about yourself, and your attitudes, knowledge, about *(X)* and other background information (like your work history).

Everything you answer will be totally confidential. No one at school or at home will see your answers. There will be a number on your questionnaire so the assessment staff can match up your answers, but no one else will know what you say. You will never be identified by name in any report, and neither your parent/guardians nor your mates will see what you say. Your parent/guardians will need to give their permission for your to be in the project if you are under 18, but they will never see or hear about any of your answers on the questionnaires.

You may drop out of the group or the assessment at any time if you choose.

If you agree to participate in the project and assessment, please sign in the space provided below. If you have any questions, you can contact: (name of project contact)

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely

Chair,
(Name of project)
Steering Committee

I understand that when I sign this I am agreeing to participate in the evaluation of this project. If I feel that there are any risks for me, I know I can refuse to answer the questions or drop out of the interview (evaluation) at any time if I want to. I understand that any information I give about myself or my family will be kept confidential, and that no one at school or at my home will be told anything I say.

_____ _____

Date Name

(Please take a copy of this signed form for your records.)

Sample 5

Source: Linney and Wandersman (1991)

TRANSFER

The strategy, management and review of the project should include plans for transfer of the lessons:

- What is going to be done with the data? How will it be analysed and presented?
- How will young people be encouraged to participate in sharing the lesssons learnt?
- Who will be trained to take over the follow up and continuous improvement of the project and its legacy?
- How will the long-term impact be identified and followed up with stakeholders?
- How will the results be interpreted and transferred to the stakeholders?
- What are the lessons learned or the benefits for others down the track?

Preparing the Report

There are many ways to summarise and report the results of your project evaluation. The following is a sample summary format incorporating information from the evaluation worksheets already completed.

Summary Format for Reporting

1. Introduction:

- Background explaining what prompted the project.
- Who are the stakeholders?
- How were they represented on the project Steering Committee, or by participation in the project?

2. Targeted needs:

- How were needs identified? (refer to the group consultative methods used).
- How were the needs prioritised? By whom?
- What precautions were taken to ensure confidentiality and informed consent?

3. Project activities:

- When did the project start and finish?
- Who participated?
- How were the participants selected?
- What did the project entail?
- How much of the project was completed?

5. Outcomes:

- What were the outcomes?
- For what outcomes have you been able to measure and document change?
- How has the project had an impact on participants' needs?
  - — Who benefited? Short-term vs long-term?
  - — What benefits and costs? Short-term vs long-term?

6. Recommendations:

- What plans should be modified for the future?
- What additional activities and new projects could be developed?
- Who is responsible for the follow-up and carriage of the project's lessons?

IMPACT MONITORING

In order to be able to learn and share the information gathered in the project and the evaluation, it is important to continue to follow-up the impact and not just report the immediate results.

Impact monitoring examines the effect of your project in a longer-time frame. You will need to look over a longer time period (maybe several years) to see the full results from the success of many projects.

Sources of Information

You will need to access external information sources in order to assess the effect of your project from a longer-term perspective. Depending on the type of project you are conducting, the following sources may be useful:

Employment

- Centrelink.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).
- Local Governments.
- Clearinghouses.

Crime Prevention

Impact variables on arrests, usually reported in monthly, quarterly or annual reports, can be gathered from:

- local police station.
- State law enforcement agency.

You may need to use reporting categories that don't exactly match your prevention population (eg, under 18, 18 to 25), but compare these data over time. As long as you continue to use the same time frame and age definitions, the comparisons will be valid.

Health

- local hospitals and treatment facilities.

You need to consider whether a positive impact from the point of view of your project will result in an increase or a decrease in the statistical measures.

For example, consider a project about drug and alcohol abuse prevention designed to provide teachers with the information to recognise the signs of alcohol and drug problems and make referrals for appropriate treatment. If this resulted in increases in admissions to treatment facilities, this would be success for the project rather than an indicator of increased mis-use of drugs and alcohol.

RESOURCES

Note: *The following is a list of references noted in the text, plus additional useful references that you may like to consult. For convenience, these resources are grouped by the sections of this manual. Where a text is referred to in more than one section, it will appear more than once here.*

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