

Legal Services **BOARD**

Evaluation Resource

for Projects funded by the Legal Services Board

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to provide a resource for groups and organisations to use when they evaluate their projects, funded by a grant from the Legal Services Board. It is designed to be as flexible as possible, so that it can be used by the wide variety of organisations involved in these grant and so that it can cover the range of projects. The guide provides a comprehensive base for undertaking evaluations. The process outlined in the guide can be followed through sequentially. Alternatively, the process can be amended and refined to suit the specific needs of various projects and organisations. The guide also aims to help build a body of evidence about the work of the sector, by using a consistent and structured research framework.

WHO IS THE GUIDE FOR?

This guide is for the groups and organisations who have received a grant from the Legal Services Board.

HOW SHOULD IT BE USED?

The guide essentially 'talks' to a generic project worker and assumes that this person will drive the evaluation. However, it can be used in a range of ways. For example, all participants in a project could share roles in undertaking an evaluation. Or it could be used an external student or consultant to undertake an independent evaluation.

STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDE

The guide is structured chronologically. It guides the evaluator through the stages of evaluation from preparing the ground through to reporting on the evaluation. The six stages are:

- **Stage 1: Prepare for an evaluation**
- **Stage 2: Plan the evaluation**
- **Stage 3: Determine evaluation indicators**
- **Stage 4: Collect the data**
- **Stage 5: Analyse the data**
- **Stage 6: Prepare the evaluation report and improve on current practice**

Each stage is presented as a worksheet for you to complete and:

- takes you through the decisions you need to make
- asks trigger questions to focus your thoughts
- highlights the issues you are likely to encounter
- provides a checklist

The Overview diagram on the next page is a summary of the complete process.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

<p>STAGE 1 Prepare for the Evaluation</p>	<p>DECIDE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project goals and objectives
<p>STAGE 2 Plan the Evaluation</p>	<p>DEFINE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Purpose of evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why is the evaluation being done? ▪ Evaluation Audience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who will receive and use the information?
	<p>DETERMINE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Process ▪ Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who will manage the evaluation? How? How will it be funded? - Which stakeholders will be involved? How? - What are the timelines?
<p>STAGE 3 Determine Evaluation Indicators</p>	<p>DETERMINE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key evaluation indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What tells us that goals and objectives have been achieved?
<p>STAGE 4 Collect Data</p>	<p>DESIGN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data collection and analysis tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the key research questions? - How will data be collected? From whom? - How will the data be analysed? - How will confidentiality be guaranteed?
	<p>COLLECT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing research, records, files, interviews, surveys, focus groups
<p>STAGE 5 Analyse Data</p>	<p>ANALYSE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data collected <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reduce - check - identify findings and conclusions - discuss and report
<p>STAGE 6 Report and Improve</p>	<p>REPORT ON</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Findings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process - Outputs - Impact
	<p>IMPROVE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Processes ▪ Practices

STAGE 1: PREPARE FOR THE EVALUATION

SET

Project goal and objectives

Why are you doing this project? What are your short, medium and long term objectives? What *difference* do you want to make? And why? Are your goals related to law reform, education, research or another purpose?

What are your goals for the community?

What is your organisation's goal?

Define your 'community' target for this project – is it a local or geographically defined community? a particular group in the community? eg. refugees; people who are homeless or experiencing violence?

What is the goal for your community target group?

Are you working with other organisations? What are the goals for your partners?

How will you undertake the project?

ISSUES

Look at your answers –

What do they mean for the evaluation?

Have you planned the project well?

Do you have enough resources (people included!) to manage the project?

How important will the evaluation be?

Investing about 10% of a project budget on an evaluation is a common practice.

What sort of investment can your organisation realistically make?

**STAGE 1
CHECKLIST**

Have you: defined goals and objectives for the project?

considered goals and objectives for all involved?

your project / organisation?

and a particular community?

considered

the *process* (how you will do the project);

the *outputs* (what you will do)

and the *impact* (what is the difference you would like to make?)

STAGE 2: PLAN THE EVALUATION

DEFINE

the purpose of the evaluation

Why are you evaluating this project? Do you usually evaluate your projects? Will this evaluation be any different? How? Why?

DEFINE

the audience for the evaluation

Who will you report to? (a funding body? project partners? the community? our board of management?) Do you have an internal or external focus? or both?

How can you use the evaluation results? (Consider: future funding applications; improving practice; keeping this project on track; feedback to participants...)

DETERMINE

the process for evaluation

How will you manage the evaluation? What suitable structures exist? Do you need a committee / group – or an individual?

Will you need an internal or external evaluator? Who is available; able and capable of managing the evaluation? Are there any conflicts?

DETERMINE

the resources available for the evaluation

What resources (time; money; materials; equipment; records) can you allocate to the evaluation? Can we afford / justify an external evaluator?

ISSUES

Look at your answers –

Are you clear about why you want to do the evaluation?
 Are you clear about how much time and effort can be put into the evaluation?
 Remember, if you reflect on your practice now, you already evaluate!
 What are the potential benefits of an evaluation? eg. a new funding application, leading to more money, more time, more people?
 Apart from money, what are the potential costs to consider? eg. political issues?
 Can you write one evaluation report and modify it for various audiences?
 How can you be creative with resources? eg. Are there local university students willing / appropriate / able to take on the evaluation for their course work?
 How can you integrate standard practices? eg. project photos? project journals?

**STAGE 2:
CHECKLIST**

Have you:	clarified the reasons for undertaking the project?
	decided how the evaluation will be managed?
	decided on the level of resources to be allocated to the evaluation?

STAGE 3: DETERMINE EVALUATION INDICATORS

DETERMINE **Key evaluation indicators**

Broadly, what will tell you that the goals and objectives of the project have been achieved? What will tell you that the project ‘made a difference’? What will show a person in the street that the project ‘made a difference’?

Using the model of evaluation in this guide, it is recommended that you break down the project into key parts. So, firstly list the stakeholders involved – eg.:

participants	organisation / s	target / community

NB. Project might not involve direct participants or may only involve a single organisation. Complete this grid as applies to your specific project. Then, break the project down into its parts and how far you are ‘thinking’ into the future and list below. For example, process can be particularly important for community projects. Do you also have medium or long term aims?

process (<i>short term aims</i>)	
outputs (<i>medium term aims</i>)	
impact (<i>longer term aims</i>)	

Then, think about what you hope to achieve for each group of stakeholders – both in terms of doing the project, and as a result of the project and put the two parts together in a grid. Keep this simple – for example:

	participants	organisation/s	
process (<i>short term</i>)		<i>Develop protocols for working together</i>	
outputs (<i>medium term</i>)		<i>Develop an MOU</i>	
impact (<i>long term</i>)		<i>Establish long term working relationships, referral systems,</i>	

ISSUES

Look at your answers –

Are you clear about what will tell you you have achieved your goals and made a difference? These are your evaluation indicators. Effective evaluation indicators are a tool to keep you on track. Use them to help you articulate the achievements of the project.

STAGE 3: CHECKLIST

Have you: _____ decided on evaluation indicators for the project?

STAGE 4: COLLECT DATA

DESIGN

data collection methods

What are the key questions to be answered through the evaluation? Tip: turn your evaluation indicators into questions.

What data collection methods will you use? (eg. focus group discussions; written surveys; structured interviews). Match methods to key research questions; available time; resources and to the stakeholders involved. Think creatively eg. project journals; surveys with pictograms; videos; photos

When will you collect data? throughout the project? at the end? months after the project finished? List below **how often** you will collect data, **from whom**.

DESIGN

data collection tools

What data collection tools do you need to design? eg. survey using pictograms; focus group outline. Tip: design each around your key research questions.

COLLECT

evaluation data

What existing data can be used in the evaluation? eg. original funding application; waiting lists; project archives...

What issues do you need to consider in collecting the data? eg. research ethics; keeping people informed; planning best use of everybody's time; storage of data

ISSUES

Look at your answers –

The key to efficient data collection is focussed key research questions – limit yourself to about ten. When this basic framework is right, designing surveys or focus groups to suit different groups of people is straightforward. Don't try to collect too much information – make it manageable.

Consider the ethics of the research *before* asking questions.

Think about collecting information efficiently as you go - it may only take 15 mins added onto a meeting for a discussion or to complete a survey. Will you need interpreters or other supports for participants? How will information be returned to you? Could you use an on-line survey?

STAGE 4: CHECKLIST

Have you:	considered the ethics of the research?
	identified the existing records and material to be collected?
	identified the new information to be collected?
	decided on your key research questions?
	decided on the most appropriate research methods for the evaluation?
	planned how often people will be surveyed/ interviewed etc?
	developed appropriate communication strategies for the project?

STAGE 5: ANALYSE DATA

ANALYSE

evaluation data

How can you reduce the data into manageable chunks? Read through the data and identify the key themes coming through; use tables and graphs for quantitative responses

How do I check the data against the evaluation indicators? Test the data against the evaluation indicators eg. If the evaluation indicator is: Participants were recruited from the target group – analyse the data to see if this is the case.

Who should the data be discussed with? Consider confidentiality or other sensitivities.

What are the key findings at this stage?

Who should you report draft findings to?

ISSUES

Look at your answers –

Are you clear about how to reduce the data into meaningful chunks?

Are you clear about who is involved in collating; reducing and analysing data?

Consider confidentiality issues when analysing data.

Consider whether you will be producing an internal or public document.

If appropriate, it is often useful to discuss draft findings with a range of people, preferably in a group. You can test the clarity of the report with these people.

What will you do if the findings are either not very good or mediocre? How will this impact on the organisation or on individuals?

STAGE 5: CHECKLIST

Have you:

collated the data you collected into manageable and logical chunks?

checked the data against the evaluation indicators?

discussed the data with some relevant people?

developed draft key findings?

presented or discussed the key findings with appropriate people?

STAGE 6: REPORT AND IMPROVE

IDENTIFY

project outputs

What did you do through this project (the 'activities'? What happened as a result – your outputs? (Think of these as 'countable' - # workshops; # participants). Think about achievements from the range of stakeholder perspectives.

project impacts

What happened as a result of the project? Did it make a difference? How? In what way? And most importantly – how do you know? What evidence do you have? (This is the information that you have collected throughout the project against your evaluation indicators.)

unintended outcomes

What were the unexpected outcomes of the project? It can be difficult to look objectively at this area, particularly if you didn't reach your stated goal. However, it is often possible to extract important learnings from this area. Unintended outcomes can be positive or negative. Your experience may provide important learnings more broadly for the funding body and for the way in which your organisation approaches future projects.

project audience

Who do we need to tell about the project outputs and achievements? Think about participants; funding bodies; the community; partnership organisations. Think about the broader implications of your project. Will the community sector, or more specifically the community legal sector be interested in the impacts and the lessons you learnt?

potential improvements

What do you need to improve? Think about the difference between your intended goal and what actually happened. If you didn't reach your goal, could you have done things differently? Is this information appropriate for an internal or external audience? Can the community sector or the community legal sector learn something valuable from your experience? Can the funding body learn something from your experience? Were your expectations of the project unrealistic? Were your goals too broad or non-specific?

REPORT

evaluation findings

What did you find in relation to the process – the way the project was conducted? (for participants; for your organisation or project partners; for the target community)

What were the outputs? What happened as a result of what you did?

What did you find in relation to the impact of the project? (for participants; for your organisation or project partners; for the target community)

How will you structure your report? What is the most powerful / useful way to demonstrate the difference the project made? How will you integrate your evidence? Remember you will need to include sections on: the project objectives, the evaluation methodology and the evaluation findings.

ISSUES

Look at your answers –

After an evaluation, you may need to take care that the information is interpreted appropriately by all, especially if there is a gap between goals and achievements. Ensure that you use the evaluation as an opportunity to turn the situation around to ensure everybody learns from the experience and improvements are implemented.

If the evaluation has highlighted areas of serious concern, eg.

underperformance; inappropriate performance etc – ensure that the issues are discussed at the appropriate management level of the organisation and your decisions and strategies are carefully thought through and documented.

You also need to plan how you improve areas that were identified as requiring improvement. and even to start thinking about your next evaluation!

STAGE 6: CHECKLIST

Have you:	developed a draft evaluation report?
	answered the key research questions in the evaluation report?
	collected feedback on the draft?
	finalised the report and prepared an executive summary?
	distributed the executive summary to the appropriate parties?
	linked the evaluation results into an improvement process?