Guideline

The Evaluation Process in 11 Steps

Member of actalliance

Brot für die Welt

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Table of Contents

Foreword

Evaluations are an important part of the project cycle in international development work. They serve accountability purposes and promote learning within an organisation and, in the best of cases, beyond. Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World) is accountable not only to its funding organisations and supporters, but also to the target groups of projects, partner organisations and the general public. The aim is for everyone involved to learn, and to improve projects and intensify desired changes.

The purpose of this guideline is to provide practical support for Brot für die Welt's partner organisations and employees as they accompany evaluation processes. It is designed to accompany externally conducted evaluations, but it also contains relevant information for other forms of evaluation.

The evaluation guideline is divided into eleven process steps. The individual steps are uniformly structured: The background for each step is explained before the purpose, procedure and parties involved are discussed. Links to further information are listed at the end of some steps. The guideline also contains templates you can download. It is available in German, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. In addition, Brot für die Welt's partner organisations have access to an online course on the basics of external project evaluations in the four working languages.

Using the guideline is not mandatory for Brot für die Welt; instead, it should be considered as an aid. For binding specifications from Brot für die Welt on project evaluations, please refer to the document "Requirements for implementation of project evaluations" (annex to the cooperation agreements between Brot für die Welt and partner organisations). By publishing this guideline, we want to promote learning about and through evaluations and help accompanying evaluation processes.

We wish you a good read and every success in conducting evaluations!

Steps of an Evaluation

1 Planning and Budgeting for an Evaluation

When: when applying for/planning the project or as soon as the need is identified

Duration: approx. 1 week

- review specifications from donors regarding evaluations
- secure financing, determine budget
- broadly define objectives and form
- determine the timing of the evaluation, taking framework conditions into account (access to the project region, availability of target groups and employees, etc.)

2 Drawing up the Terms of Reference

When: at least 10 weeks before the scheduled data collection

Duration: approx. 3 to 6 weeks

- identify stakeholders and interested parties and plan their involvement in the course of the evaluation (time, form)
- develop the Terms of Reference, possibly together with other stakeholders

3 Obtaining Offers

When: after finalizing the ToR

Duration: approx. 4 to 6 weeks (in compliance with the deadline for submitting offers)

- distribute the Terms of Reference – to known evaluators, via Internet forums, networks

4 Selecting Evaluators

When: immediately after the submission deadline

Duration: at least 1 week

- check offers received
- select evaluators, possibly together with other stakeholders
- document the decision and the reasons for it

5 Concluding the Contract

When: after selecting the evaluators

Duration: 1 day to 2 weeks

- formulate the contract
- have the contract signed by all contracting parties

Preparation

Legend

→ When

L Duration

6 7 8 9 10 11

Implementation

Utilisation

6 Hold Kick-Off and Clarification Meeting

→ **if participants or target groups need to be visited, a lead time of at least 2 weeks must be planned**

approx. ½ to 1 day

- compile material, documents and contacts and provide them to the evaluators
- agree on deadlines with the evaluators and other stakeholders, discuss logistical and other required support as well as content-related, methodological and formal expectations, limits and possibilities

7 Comment on and accept the Inception Report

→ **approx. 1 week after the kick-off and clarification meeting**

approx. 2 weeks

- discuss and accept the inception report

8 Support Data Collection

→ **during data collection**

approx. 2 to 4 weeks

- agree on logistics and dates for meetings, possibly also arrange safety precautions

9 Discussion of Preliminary Results

→ **after data collection**

½ to 1 day

- evaluators present the data collected and preliminary results

10 Assessment of the Evaluation Report

→ **after receipt of the draft report**

up to 2 weeks after receipt of the draft report

- check the draft report and request corrections, if necessary
- accept the evaluation report

11 Utilisation and Communication of Results

→ **after receipt of the evaluation report**

approx. 2 months after receipt of the report: development of an implementation plan

- discuss the results and recommendations with stakeholders and formulate implementation steps
- communicate results and recommendations to relevant stakeholders in an appropriate manner
- implement and monitor the implementation plan

Evaluation – Introduction

Definition

In international cooperation, evaluation is defined as "The systematic and objective assessment of a planned, ongoing or completed intervention, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Evaluation also refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of an intervention.

An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into decision-making processes."

OECD: Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-based Management for Sustainable Development, 2023

Why have an evaluation?

Project evaluations have two key **objectives:**

- **learning** by all stakeholders in order to improve further project planning and intensify desired changes. Everyone with whom the results are shared, i.e. the target groups, implementation and partner organisations, funding organisations and other stakeholders involved (e.g. other institutions and organisations), should have the opportunity to learn from the evaluation results.
- **accountability** towards key players such as target groups or funding organisations and supporters (donors, co-financiers, etc.).

What is evaluated?

The **object of evaluation** i.e. what is being evaluated, may vary substantially. Examples include:

- one or more project components
- a project (project evaluations)
- several projects with the same thematic focus or with thematically similar components (cross-project evaluation)
- an overarching programme that encompasses several projects (e.g. all projects in a country)
- a (sector) policy
- an instrument or approach to work
- an organisation or individual units or processes of an implementing organisation (e.g. PME, finance systems, personnel or management structure)

Who evaluates?

Evaluations can be conducted in different ways:

- as a **self-evaluation** by the persons responsible for the implementation of the project
- as an **internal evaluation** by people who work in the same organisation that is conducting or funding the project but who are not involved in its implementation.
- as an **external evaluation** by external, independent evaluators

Overview: Who evaluates? Points to be considered.			
	Self-evaluation	**Internal evaluation**	**External evaluation**
Costs	Relatively low costs, as in-house evaluators are used.	Relatively low costs, as no fees need to be paid for external evaluators in this case, either.	Relatively high costs because external evaluators must be paid. Usually, there are additional transport and accommodation costs for the evaluators.
Non-monetary overhead (time, personnel, etc.)	The time required by project personnel is high: They carry out the preparation, implementation and follow-up of the evaluation themselves. They must have the expertise required to do so.	The amount of time required by the people performing the tasks is large: One advantage compared to external evaluators is that they already know the organisation's framework conditions.	Terms of Reference (ToR) must be drawn up, the tendering procedure must be organised, and the evaluators must be selected. Sharing information, organising logistics and communication with external evaluators require additional effort as the evaluators generally do not know the project and the stakeholders involved.
Possible negative effects	The results may be considered less credible by outsiders due to a lack of distance from the object of evaluation.	Conflicts could arise within the organisation. The independence of the evaluators may be restricted.	It may take lots of time for external evaluators to understand the project in its entirety, as well as the framework conditions.
Possible positive side-effects	The team members can learn that they are responsible for success and that they can also influence the design.	"Learning from each other" and exchange within the organisation can be promoted so that the knowledge and experience among colleagues is better utilised.	An impartial outsider's view can reveal new aspects, raise new questions, generate new ideas and, in doing so, provide new impetus for the project/organisation. The acceptance of results is higher among people outside of the commissioning organisation.
Quality of the evaluation report	It is often the case that no formal evaluation report is produced. The way in which the results are documented must be clearly defined in advance.	The form of the evaluation report must comply with internal specifications; if there are no specifications, an agreement must be made in advance.	An evaluation report that answers the questions set down in the Terms of Reference and complies with the agreed stipulations must be prepared.
There are also **hybrid forms of evaluations in which internal and external evaluators work together.** This is the case, for example, when external independent evaluators systematically support the processes in a self-evaluation. This approach ensures that the evaluation is closely aligned with the needs of the project team while an impartial view is maintained.			

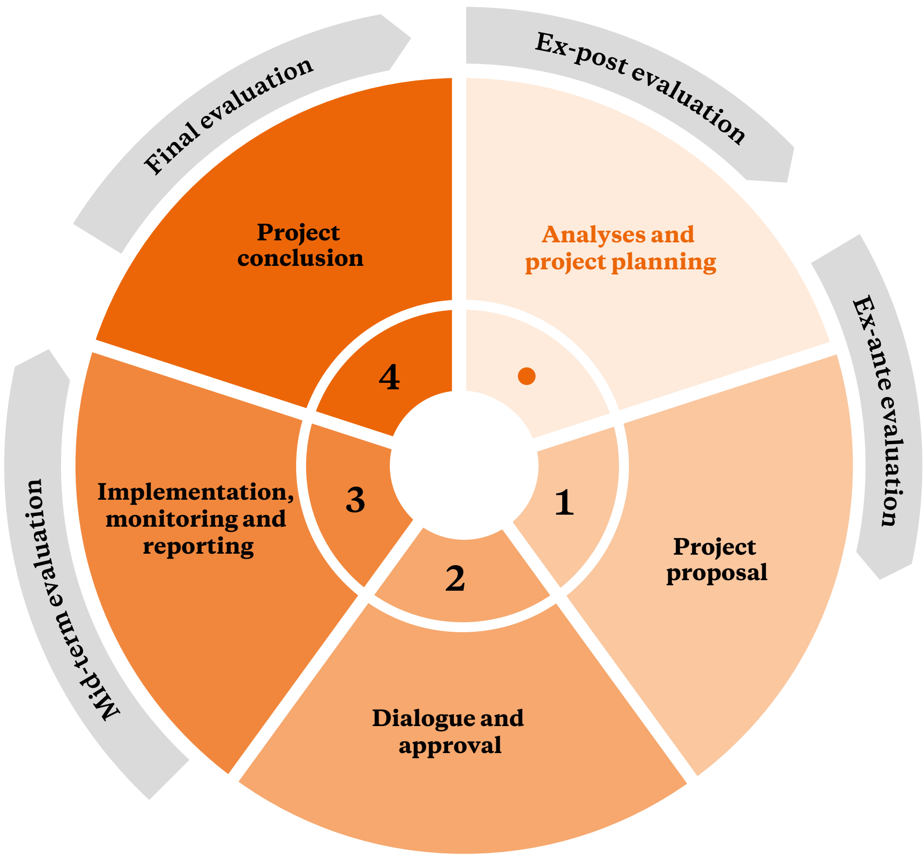
There is no one best type of evaluation – depending on the requirements, objectives and specifications of the funding organisation(s), a decision must be made in favour of one type or another. The points mentioned in the table should be regarded only as a decision-making aid.

When is an evaluation conducted?

An evaluation can take place at different times depending on the specific interest and other factors:

- **Ex-ante evaluations** – Before the start of the project, the framework conditions and prerequisites of the project are compiled, and the planned measures are evaluated against this background.
- **Mid-term evaluations** – The evaluation is conducted during the course of the project to ensure that the project is on track to achieve its objectives and to identify any potential for improvement. In addition, lessons can be learnt from the results for future funding phases or similar projects.
- **Final evaluations** – They take place to establish whether the defined objectives have been met at the end of a project (funding period) and which effects are already apparent in order to learn for future funding phases or similar projects.
- **Ex-post evaluations** – Some time after the end of the project (often several years later), an evaluation is carried out to determine which changes have been brought about by the project and which have continued beyond the project implementation.

When to Evaluate - the Project Cycle



How is an evaluation carried out? - Quality standards

Evaluation standards describe how the evaluation process should be organised in order to produce high-quality evaluation results. They must be observed by both evaluators and those who commission evaluations. They serve as orientation for the assignment, implementation and assessment of evaluations.

The most important standards at Brot für die Welt[1]:

- **Usefulness** – An evaluation should address the objectives of the evaluation and the project parties' information requirements (it must also consider the interests of the target groups). Usefulness also includes the competence and credibility of the evaluators and the participation of all stakeholders in the evaluation process. Ideally, evaluation results can be incorporated into upcoming decisions and changes. Evaluation reports should contain all necessary information, and they should be easy to understand and transparent.

- **Feasibility** – An evaluation should be planned and conducted in a realistic and cost-effective manner. This includes appropriate evaluation methods that are adequate in relation to the expected benefit of the evaluation.

- **Fairness** – The various perspectives of the main stakeholders should be incorporated into the evaluation. Fairness also requires ensuring that evaluation results are impartial and, if possible, made available to all persons involved in the project. The safety, dignity and rights of the people involved must be safeguarded.

- **Precision of data** - An evaluation should provide accurate and comprehensive information on the previously agreed evaluation questions. Key ways of guaranteeing this include:
  - describing and analysing the object of evaluation and the evaluation context in sufficient breadth and depth,
  - utilising adequate methodologies and information sources,
  - collecting enough data that a generally valid statement and assessment can be made,
  - making conclusions from the evaluation results comprehensible and assessable.

Cross-cutting topics

Cross-cutting topics are topics that run through the work of the commissioning organisation like a common thread and, consequently, also through the evaluation of each project.

Gender, environmental impact and **inclusion** are cross-cutting topics for Brot für die Welt. This means that each evaluation should be able to answer the question of how the project activities will impact women, men, boys and girls, gender equality and people with a disability and which active role they play in achieving the objectives of the project activities. The focus of the cross-cutting topic of environmental impact is on protecting and conserving natural resources. Cross-cutting topics should be incorporated into the Terms of Reference (ToR).

! Notes

To ensure that the quality of the evaluation meets the expectations and interests of all stakeholders to the greatest extent possible, they should be involved throughout the evaluation process, which is to say, from the planning of the evaluation to the communication and utilisation of evaluation results and recommendations.

1 Based on the standards for evaluations of DeGEval and the OECD DAC international quality standards for evaluation. Reference documents with further explanations, cf. link list.

Links

OECD (2023): Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-based Management for Sustainable Development (English, French, Spanish).
https://doi.org/10.1787/632da462-en-fr-es

External evaluation

Austrian Development Agency (2020): Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations (English)
www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Evaluierung/Evaluierungs_Leitfaeden/Guidelines_for_Programme_and_Project_Evaluations_ADA_2020.pdf

Bond (2015): Impact evaluation – A guide for commissioners and managers (English)
www.bond.org.uk/resources/impact-evaulation/

DeGEval: Recommendations for Clients of Evaluations. An Introductory Brochure for the Field of Public Administration (English)
www.degeval.org/fileadmin/content/Z03_Publikationen/DeGEval-Empfehlungen/Recommendations_Englisch/Recom_Clients_Evaluations.pdf

Self-evaluation and internal evaluation

International Labour Organization (2020): Guidance Note 2.2: Self and Internal Evaluations (English)
www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_746710.pdf

Zarinpoush, F. (2006): Project evaluation guide for nonprofit organizations (English)
www.researchgate.net/publication/263997175_project_evaluation_guide_for_nonprofit_organizations

DEval (2022): Sowing & Harvesting. Participatory Evaluation Handbook, 2nd English edition (English)
www.deval.org/fileadmin/Redaktion/PDF/05-Publikationen/Externe_Publikationen/2022_Sowing_and_Harvesting/2022-Focelac-Sowing_and_Harvesting.pdf

Evaluation standards

DeGEval Standards for evaluation (English)
www.degeval.org/en/publications/degeval-standards/

OECD (2010): Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (English)
https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264083905-en

UNEG – United Nations Evaluation Group (2020): Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (English)
https://procurement-notices.undp.org/view_file.cfm?doc_id=302194

Step 1

Planning and Budgeting

Key points in brief

1. **The planning of an evaluation is part of project planning and budgeting.**
2. **The duration of the evaluation process should be considered, and its start should be planned well in advance.**
3. **When planning, the future use of evaluation results and recommendations must be taken into account.**

Background

Evaluations must be considered at the project planning stage to ensure that sufficient time and resources are available for preparation, realisation, communication and utilisation of evaluation results.

The following questions are important when planning a project and help to decide whether an evaluation should be conducted:

- Is it an innovative project, and does the feasibility or effectiveness of its approach need to be reviewed after a certain period of time?
- Are the framework conditions stable, or are they subject to extreme change so that feasibility and effectiveness must be reviewed under changed conditions?
- Is the project going to be expanded, or will there be a follow-up phase?
- Is the project of particular strategic or political importance?
- Are there internal or external specifications (e.g. from funding organisations) concerning which projects must be evaluated and when?

The need for an evaluation may also arise during the project duration, for instance if

- significant delays occur,
- objectives (foreseeably) cannot be achieved,
- key framework conditions have changed.

When considering the timing of an evaluation, it is important to remember that both preparation and coordination with stakeholders (e.g. when drawing up the ToR) and the implementation and realisation of evaluation recommendations will take time and may require additional financial resources. At least six months should be planned for the preparation and realisation of the evaluation. In particular, the involvement and availability of the persons directly involved in the project must be taken into account: In agro-ecological projects, for example, the target groups may not be able to support the evaluation during the harvest season. In addition, weeks or months can pass between the tendering procedure and the realisation of the evaluation, as qualified evaluators are often not available at short notice.

The project budget should include a budget line for an evaluation. It has proven appropriate to allocate approx. 3 to 5 % of the project budget to this purpose. The size of the project should be considered when estimating how many days will be needed for the evaluation and what additional costs (e.g. travel expenses) will be incurred (see checklist).

Purpose

Concrete planning and sufficient budgeting ensure that the evaluation is carried out at the right time, with adequate methods and at the planned scope. It also ensures that the questions posed can be answered. Relevant project parties should be involved in the evaluation process from the outset, making subsequent utilisation of evaluation results more likely.

It is important to start planning the evaluation in good time to ensure that the evaluation can be completed at the scheduled time (see the overview "Steps of an Evaluation").

Approach and involved parties

As a rule, the project implementing organisation draws up the budget for the evaluation. Those responsible for the evaluation within the commissioning organisation should allocate sufficient time to prepare for and monitor the evaluation process. Already in this first step, it is worth agreeing on who is responsible for implementing evaluation recommendations at the end of the evaluation process. To ensure that the evaluation results are owned by target groups and other relevant project stakeholders (ownership), it is important to organise the evaluation process in a participatory manner.

! Notes

The planning phase includes a **provisional budget prior to the start of the project.** The evaluation budget will need to be modified subsequently during the process of drawing up the ToR or if framework conditions change.

Checklist

Important questions to consider when planning and budgeting for an evaluation:

- ☐ 1. Should the evaluation be conducted by one or more person(s)?
- ☐ 2. Approximately how many working days are required for this/these person(s)?
- ☐ 3. What is the expected daily rate/fee for evaluators?
- ☐ 4. Which areas/project regions should be included in the evaluation or visited by the evaluators?
- ☐ 5. What are the approximate costs of transport, accommodation, visas and other logistics?
- ☐ 6. Do rooms need to be rented for group discussions or for the presentation?
- ☐ 7. Do transport and/or catering for target group representatives, government representatives, experts, etc. need to be paid for?
- ☐ 8. Are translators needed? What are the costs for their services?
- ☐ 9. Are there costs for disseminating the products/results of the evaluation?
- ☐ 10. Do costs for insurance for the evaluators need to be covered (e.g. when they travel to risk areas)?
- ☐ 11. Are there additional expenses due to taxes (e.g. VAT)?

Excel document download

Example of a cost calculation for an evaluation

Cost calculation for evaluation X in country Y (all amounts in euros)

Fees					
Fee for evaluator I	Estimated number of days:		Estimated daily rate:		0.00
Fee for evaluator II	Estimated number of days:		Estimated daily rate:		0.00
Subtotal (net)					0.00
Any applicable taxes	Tax rate in percent:				0.00
Subtotal (gross)					**0.00**
Travel expenses					
Accommodation costs	Number of overnight stays:		Costs per unit:		0.00
Transportation: Flights	Number of round-trip flights:		Costs per unit:		0.00
Other transportation costs: Train tickets, taxis, etc.	Number:		Costs per unit:		0.00
Subtotal (net)					0.00
Any applicable taxes	Tax rate in percent:				0.00
Subtotal (gross)					**0.00**
Other costs					
Translation costs					0.00
Workshop costs					0.00
Visa fees					0.00
Costs for disseminating the products/results of the evaluation					0.00
Subtotal (net)					0.00
Any applicable taxes	Tax rate in percent:				0.00
Subtotal (gross)					**0.00**
Total (gross)					**0.00**

Step 2

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Key points in brief

1. **ToR provide the reference framework for the evaluators and are enclosed as an attachment to the contract.**
2. **ToR should be created by the commissioning organisation in consultation with other project parties.**
3. **The evaluation questions should take into account both the OECD DAC evaluation criteria and cross-cutting topics.**

According to the OECD DAC, Terms of Reference (ToR) are a written document in which

- the purpose and scope of the evaluation,
- the methods to be used,
- the norms and standards against which performance is to be assessed or analyses implemented,
- the resources provided,
- deadlines to be complied with and
- the reporting requirements

are described.

OECD: Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-based Management for Sustainable Development, 2023

Background

ToR are a description of the services to be rendered and constitute the frame of reference for evaluators.

In accordance with international quality standards, evaluations should take into account the six OECD DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability). For this reason it is helpful to formulate questions relating to these criteria in the ToR. Depending on the purpose of the evaluation, it is possible to make a well-founded selection from these six evaluation criteria. In practice, this means thinking critically about which criteria make the most sense in order to ensure the best possible quality evaluation that is of great interest to users (cf. OECD 2021, p. 23). Of course, additional questions can also be formulated.

Purpose

Participatory development of the ToR is a key process in which the research interests of the various stakeholders are discussed and clearly defined: Who needs which information? The ToR stipulate what is to be provided and implemented, under what framework conditions (time available, financial resources, size of target group, etc.) and with what objectives. The methodological approach can be (broadly) defined in the ToR.

The ToR should specify minimum methodological requirements:

- Use of different methods, data sources and perspectives (triangulation)
- Application of the OECD DAC quality standards and criteria
- Gender-sensitive approach and application of "do no harm" principles

Approach and involved parties

ToR are usually prepared by the commissioning organisation. In order to derive maximum benefit from the evaluation, as many project stakeholders as possible (e.g. representatives of the target group, the project executing organisation, the funding organisation) should be involved in developing the evaluation questions. If it seems appropriate, other stakeholders, e.g. representatives of the local public administration or specialist organisations, can also be involved. This increases openness to and interest in the results, as well as willingness to pass on information to the evaluators. If not all interested project parties can be involved in developing the ToR, they should at least be given access to them in order to be informed.

External consultants, such as CSS (Consultancy and Support Services), can be involved in the development of the ToR. Evaluators, on the other hand, are not involved in developing the ToR. However, the ToR should always be discussed during the kick-off and clarification meeting and may be changed subsequently (amendments will be recorded in the inception report or a protocol). The interests of the commissioning organisation guide the formulation of the ToR: The ToR should not be based on the competences of evaluators who may have already been identified.

Depending on the stipulations of the commissioning or funding organisations, cross-cutting topics must be included in the ToR so that they can be incorporated into the evaluation.

Options for handling the planned budget in the ToR

	Options for handling the planned budget	Advantages	Disadvantages
1	**No reference to the evaluation budget made in the ToR.**	In their offers, interested evaluators submit a proposal that answers the questions of the ToR as well as possible and budgets for them accordingly. The offers usually vary more from each other.	The offers can greatly exceed the planned budget.
2	**The evaluation budget is not specified in the ToR. Instead, the estimated number of working days is indicated.**	This information serves as a guide for the evaluators regarding the amount of work involved and thus ensures that offers are more precisely tailored.	Specifying the estimated days could limit the methodological suggestions in the offers.
3	**The maximum available budget is specified in the ToR.**	This information can provide the prospective evaluators with a guideline so that their offers do not exceed the maximum limit.	There is a risk that offers will exhaust the specified budget with the result that the cost estimates are not necessarily based on what is required.
4	**A detailed cost plan is included in the ToR.**	The prospective evaluators submit offers that correspond exactly to the expectations of the commissioning organisation.	The evaluators only have limited scope to develop the evaluation design (methodology and procedure).

Notes

- When ongoing projects are evaluated, questions about previous projects can also be included, if applicable. Among other things, this makes it possible to find out whether previously achieved project effects are lasting.
- In order to maximise participation, the evaluation report (or at least a summary) should be available in the respective working language and, if necessary, in the local language. This stipulation is anchored in the ToR.
- As part of a project evaluation, questions about the management of the implementing organisation can also be included in the evaluation questions. But note the following: Questions relating to the organisation (management, organisational development, etc.) require special expertise on the part of the evaluators. This must be taken into account when formulating the key skills required in the ToR.
- Specifications from the commissioning and/or funding organisations may need to be considered (e.g. minimum components of the evaluation report). They can be noted in the ToR. Details should be discussed in the kick-off and clarification meeting (see the checklist in step 6 "Kick-Off and Clarification Meeting").
- The ToR can be used to commission evaluators to prepare a plan for implementing their recommendations. It may be necessary to plan higher costs for this (for budgeting an evaluation, see the cost calculation template in step 1 "Planning and Budgeting"). Ultimately, however, the commissioning organisation is responsible for handling the evaluation results and recommendations.
- If an evaluation team is required, this should be mentioned in the ToR. Different genders should be represented in the team. Cooperation among evaluators with different, complementary expertise and experience is also desirable, as interdisciplinary exchange can improve the quality of the evaluation.
- Questions on cross-cutting topics (such as gender, inclusion, environmental impact) can be integrated into the questions based on the various DAC criteria. Considering cross-cutting topics in the ToR is necessary for them to be reflected upon in conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned.
- The ToR should point out that the evaluation questions – where possible and appropriate – should be answered in a differentiated manner depending on age, gender and other criteria such as socio-economic background, disability, etc. Attention should be paid to multiple discrimination regarding the target groups (intersectionality).
- As the table on p. 18 shows, there are various ways of handling the scheduled budget in the ToR.

Links

Better Evaluation: Terms of Reference (English, French)
www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/managers-guide-evaluation/terms-reference
www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/methods/terms-reference
(you can also find some examples of ToR on this website).

WFP (2021): Technical Note: Evaluation Questions and Criteria (English)
https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/258036f37ecb4a17af7ea8afd212b0f1/download/

OECD (2021): Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully (English, French)
www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/applying-evaluation-criteria-thoughtfully_543e84ed-en

World Bank (2011): Writing Terms of Reference for an Evaluation: A how-to Guide (English)
https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/209341599772583527/pdf/Writing-Terms-of-Reference-for-an-Evaluation-A-How-to-Guide.pdf

Brot für die Welt partner organisations can find more information on this topic in the online basic course on external project evaluations. Information about access to the course can be found in the *info sheet*. The basic course is part of the Brot für die Welt learning portal:
https://ewde-elearning.de/

Word document download

Sample structure

Hints on drafting the ToR can be found below the headings. They must be replaced with specifications relating to the evaluation at hand.
Note the following: Not all points/questions need to be included in the ToR. These questions are for orientation purposes only!

Terms of Reference for evaluations

Introduction

The object of evaluation and its contextual conditions should be described here in a few sentences.

Possible content:

- Brief profile of the commissioning organisation
- Brief description of the object of evaluation (such as the project, project components or instrument), the goal of the project or instrument, the geographic coverage, the target group/s, the organisations involved in the project, institutions, groups, timescale to be evaluated, etc.
- Other project parties relevant to the evaluation (organisations, partners, networks, government offices, etc.)
- Description of the context, notable features, or difficulties
- Sources of funding
- Information about the last evaluation, if relevant

Why?
The evaluators must be able to identify what is to be evaluated and against which background. Additionally, the evaluators will receive an insight into the environment and context of the project so they can assess who has interest in and influence on the project. No details need to be provided here, as they can be discussed extensively during the preparation of the evaluation.

Cause and objective of the evaluation

The research interest and the reasons for the evaluation should be explained here.

Possible content:

- Why should the evaluation be performed?
- What will the results be used for?
- Who will use the results?
- Why at this point in time?
- Who initiated the evaluation?

Why?
The evaluators need to understand the reasons and objectives for the evaluation in order to tailor their offers and, in the event that they are commissioned, their workload accordingly.

Key questions

This is where specific questions are formulated that the evaluation should answer. It is a good idea to limit the evaluation to a maximum of 15 questions to ensure the most relevant questions are addressed in sufficient depth. Gender or other cross-cutting topics such as environmental impact and inclusion of people with a disability should be taken into account. Questions on project management, processes, procedures and standards, as well as a project's or organisation's M&E system can also be incorporated here. Organising the evaluation questions according to the selected OECD DAC evaluation criteria is recommended.

Why?
It must be ensured that the evaluators meet the expectations; the evaluation report must answer the questions set out in the ToR.

⇨Relevance
Is the project doing the right thing?

Standard questions:
1. To what extent are the project goals aligned with the needs of the target group?
2. To what extent are the project objectives aligned with the needs of particularly disadvantaged or vulnerable target groups (possible differentiation by age, income, gender, ethnicity, etc.)?
3. To what extent is the project design plausible, appropriate and realistic (in technical, organizational and financial terms)?
4. To what extent was the project adapted to changing conditions that arose during implementation?

⇨ Coherence
How suitable is the project?

Standard questions:
1. To what extent does the project align with other (development policy) measures in a country, region or sector?
2. To what extent is the project design and its implementation coordinated with the activities of other donors?
3. To what extent is the project consistent with international and national norms and standards (such as human rights)?
4. To what extent are existing systems and structures (of partners/other donors/international organisations) being used for the implementation of the activities?

⇨Effectiveness
Is the project achieving its objectives?

Standard questions:
1. To what extent have the project objectives been, or are expected to be, achieved?
2. To what extent were or will the outputs of the project be achieved?
3. To what extent did the activities or outputs contribute to the achievement of the project objectives? What factors were decisive for the achievement or non-achievement of the project objectives?
4. To what extent did the project contribute to the achievement of the objectives among the direct target groups?

⇨Efficiency
How efficiently are the resources being used?

Standard questions:
1. To what extent were the project's inputs (financial, human and material resources) used economically in relation to the outputs produced (products, capital goods and services) (production efficiency)?
2. To what extent were the outputs achieved on time and within the planned timeframe?
3. To what extent could the project’s outputs have been increased through alternative use of inputs?
4. To what extent is the relationship between inputs and effects achieved by the project appropriate (allocation efficiency)?

⇨Effects on development (Impact)
What difference does the project make?

Standard questions:
1. To what extent can overarching intended/non-intended or positive/negative effects be identified or anticipated?
2. What factors were decisive for the achievement, or non-achievement of the developmental impacts?
3. To what extent did the project lead to structural or institutional changes?
4. To what extent was the project exemplary and/or had a broad impact?

⇨Sustainability
Are the effects lasting?

Standard questions:
1. To what extent are the positive effects of the project sustainable?
2. To what extent has the project contributed to the target groups' ability and willingness to maintain the positive effects of the project over time?
3. To what extent has the project contributed to strengthening the resilience of the target groups?
4. What are the risks and what is the potential for the sustainable effectiveness of the project?

Evaluation design/methods

This point should include a brief description of the minimum requirements regarding the methods and evaluation design. The inception report lays out which methods will actually be used for which evaluation questions during the collection phase (see step 7). Normally here, it is pointed out that the OECD DAC standards need to be considered and that different methods and perspectives of various stakeholder groups must be used to answer the evaluation questions (triangulation). Sometimes this point also specifies whether a Theory of Change (ToC) should be reflected upon or reconstructed in the scope of the evaluation. That is to say, the evaluations should review the implicit or explicit cause-and-effect assumptions in a project and assess the extent to which the measures could result in the desired results and effects.

Additionally, this point should contain a few words on which project stakeholders (partner organisations, target group(s), other organisations, government bodies, funding organisations, etc.) need to be included in the evaluation and which documents (project proposal, narrative reports, etc.) need to be considered.

Why?
This tells the evaluators which quality standards definitely need to be considered when they prepare their offer and complied with when they conduct the evaluation, as well as which quality standards are binding, given that the ToR are an integral component of the contract.
Information on project parties and existing documents helps the evaluators estimate how much time they will need for the evaluation. However, it should be noted that this is the “minimum information”; if other stakeholders are deemed important during the evaluation, they should also be included.

Note: The specific methods to be used for the evaluation should be proposed and supplemented by the evaluators. However, it is possible to define methods in the ToR that must be used in the evaluation.

Process of the evaluation/time frame

A rough time frame should be set out here that includes when the evaluation is to take place, by when certain interim results must be presented and by when the evaluation should be completed.

Why?
The evaluators need to be able to identify the time specifications and whether they can supply the specified products within the given deadlines.

Expected products

This point should set out which products the evaluators must submit and what content and features they should contain (language, formal requirements, etc.).

Examples:

- Inception report (see also step 7, “Inception Report”)
- Interim report (depending on the scope of the evaluation)
- Draft of the evaluation report
- Final evaluation report[1] with precise specifications on the expected scope of the report (number of pages), language of the report and the type and number of recommendations.
- Documentation of the main evaluation results in an appealing short form (on 1 to 2 pages with images and/or graphics) or as an infographic
- Report as video or photo history

Why?
The evaluators are able to assess the work required and are contractually obliged to deliver the products that need to comply with the specified features because the ToR are integral parts of the agreement.

Key qualifications of the evaluators

This point should define the qualifications, previous knowledge and experience expected of the evaluators regarding technical expertise, linguistic skills, methodology, cultural specifics and regional specifics. A team is not necessarily required, but it is recommended in many cases. Evaluators should be competent in the relevant cross-cutting topics.

Why?
The evaluators are aware of the expectations and requirements the commissioning organisation uses to assess the appropriateness of offers during the selection process. They are thus able to assess whether they are eligible to apply or whether (an)other evaluator(s) should be involved to guarantee that any gaps in skills and experience are addressed.

[1] See the sample structure of an evaluation report at the end of step 10, “Assessment of the Evaluation Report”.

Content of the evaluators' offer

This point should specify whether offers can be submitted directly or whether an expression of interest along with CVs is requested first, and offers can be submitted only upon invitation. The evaluators' offers should contain the following:

- CVs of all evaluators involved
- Content of the offer:
  - Outline of the planned evaluation procedure
  - Short explanation and justification of the methods to be deployed; here, depending on the research interest, the commissioning organisation may request a specific paragraph that sets out how relevant cross-cutting topics need to be considered
- Financial proposal
  - Complete cost estimate that includes both the fee and any ancillary costs to be incurred, such as transport, accommodation, taxes, fees and costs of workshops
- Additionally, information about the following points should be provided:
  - the submission deadline
  - the submission form (digital or by post)
  - to whom the offer may be submitted (e-mail address or/and address with details of the responsible person)
  - exclusion criteria, such as for evaluators who were involved in the planning and implementation of the project to be evaluated and are not free of conflicts of interest.

Why?
The evaluators know what they need to submit so that the commissioning organisation receives comparable and informative offers. If prospective evaluators have any questions, they know whom they can contact.

Selection criteria for awarding the assignment

Information about the selection criteria and their weighting can also be provided at the end of the ToR. It makes sense to mention at least the following three criteria:

Selection criteria	Weighting of the selection criteria in %[2]
Quality of the technical offer (the concept proposed plays a particularly important role here)	40 %
Qualification of the evaluators	30 %
Total price	30 %

Why?
This information helps the evaluators more accurately assess their chances of being awarded the assignment and to better tailor their offer to the organisation's needs. In addition, this information promotes transparency and a fair contract award procedure.

[2] It is the responsibility of the commissioning person or entity to determine the weighting based on their needs. The weighting in this table is merely an example.

Step 3

Obtaining Offers

Key points in brief

1. **As a rule, at least three offers must be obtained.**
2. **The offers are obtained on the basis of the ToR.**

Background

As a rule, at least three offers should be obtained for an evaluation. The offers from the evaluators can include a completely new perspective, new questions and/or new methods. Offers usually include a section on content and methodology, a financial offer and CVs that show the evaluators' prior knowledge. This also often makes it possible to check the independence of the evaluators.

Purpose

Offers should be obtained after the ToR have been drawn up, i.e. once it has been determined which qualifications are required to carry out the evaluation. The ToR are the basis on which potential interested parties can submit an offer. Obtaining offers makes it possible to compare both financial and technical proposals. It should also be ensured that the evaluators are independent and unbiased and that they have the necessary technical expertise.

Approach and involved parties

The commissioning organisation is generally responsible for obtaining offers. One option is to specifically request offers from evaluators and consulting firms that are already known to the tendering organisation, have been recommended by other organisations or have been found through targeted research. Other ways of obtaining offers include publications in newspapers, on websites, on social media channels or via email distribution lists of networks of freelance evaluators. Publishing announcements on tender portals of national or regional evaluation associations is another option. Partner organisations of Brot für die Welt can also ask CSS (Consultancy and Support Services) for assistance in finding suitable evaluators. However, to avoid conflicts of interest, CSS should not evaluate any projects itself.

It is important to create equal opportunities for all bidders. Information on the evaluation assignment that goes beyond the ToR therefore must be made available to all potential bidders. To accomplish this, it is a good idea to collect questions from interested parties and share the answers with all interested parties at a time previously specified in the ToR.

Step 4
Selecting Evaluators

Key points in brief

1. **The selection of evaluators should be a participatory, transparent process following pre-defined criteria.**
2. **Data protection regulations must be complied with when handling CVs.**

Background

The external evaluators are selected once the offers have been received. This selection process should be as participatory as possible in order to take different perspectives into account at this stage, too. Before the actual selection, it is important to define criteria that are used to evaluate the offers and make the selection. Criteria relating to technical competences on cross-cutting topics (such as gender, inclusion, environmental impact) must also be defined depending on the research interests. To ensure transparency in the awarding of contracts, the criteria should be specified in the ToR (see step 2, sample structure ToR: selection criteria for awarding the assignment), and the assessment and reasons for selection or rejection should be documented. This also makes it possible to provide evaluators with feedback on their offer on request, and to justify the selection to auditors, if necessary.

Purpose

Both the proposed evaluation methods and the experience and knowledge of the evaluators are crucial for the credibility and usefulness of the evaluation results. That is why a careful analysis is needed of whether the stipulations and expectations formulated in the ToR are met satisfactorily.

Approach and involved parties

In addition to the commissioning organisation, other stakeholders in the project to be evaluated should be involved in selecting evaluators so their perspectives can also be taken into account. This can result in greater acceptance of the evaluation results. Since offers usually include the CVs of the evaluators, care must be taken to ensure that data protection regulations are taken into account and that information provided in CVs is not passed on to third parties.

During the selection process, the commissioning organisation has the opportunity to negotiate with the evaluators regarding the offer they have submitted (e.g. number of working days, time period, etc.). It may be a good idea to invite several evaluators/evaluation teams to an interview if several offers are of interest or if it is difficult to make a decision based on the written offers. However, this option and the possibility of negotiating the submitted offer should be communicated in advance in the ToR; equal opportunities for bidders must be ensured in the process.

Filling in an evaluation matrix in order to compare and evaluate the individual offers according to the previously defined criteria is advisable. Criteria that are used to evaluate the offers should incorporate the selection criteria mentioned in the ToR. The criteria generally relate to:

1. the quality of the technical offer, including the appropriateness of the methods and procedures proposed to achieve the evaluation objectives.
2. the qualifications of the evaluators, which are usually evident in their CVs.
3. the total price stated in the offer.

An Excel template for assessing the offers is provided under "Downloads" at the end of this section. The template is an example and should be adapted to the respective evaluation. This means that criteria listed in the template can be deleted and new ones added; the maximum number of points to be awarded for a criterion can also be adjusted.

Link

Better Evaluation: Select an evaluator/evaluation team (English, French)
www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/managers-guide-evaluation/engage-team/select-evaluator-evaluation-team

Excel document for assessing evaluation offers

	Name of the evaluators/evaluation team										
Exclusion criteria	The offer was not submitted on time										
	The offer is incomplete										
	The proposed evaluators were involved in planning or implementing the project to be evaluated										
	The proposed evaluators have conflicts of interest										
	Criterion (adapt as needed)	Maximum possible scores (adapt as needed)	Scores awarded (calculated automatically)	Assessment: fulfilment of criterion / Price of offer	Comments/ Justification	Scores awarded (calculated automatically)	Assessment: fulfilment of criterion / Price of offer	Comments/ Justification	Scores awarded (calculated automatically)	Assessment: fulfilment of criterion / Price of offer	Comments/ Justification
Quality of the technical offer	a) The offer addresses the main evaluation goals and questions from the ToR. The products to be produced and tasks to be carried out are addressed by the offer	12	Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>		
	b) Various methods are planned to answer each of the evaluation questions. The methods proposed are suitable	11	Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>		
	c) The planned approach is feasible, takes into account contextual conditions, the number of proposed working days is appropriate	11	Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>		
	e) The offer is well-structured and clearly formulated	6	Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>		
	Total score: technical offer	**40**	**0.00**			**0.00**			**0.00**		
Qualification of the evaluators	a) Proven expertise in the topic/sector of the project to be evaluated	7	Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>		
	b) Proven expertise in conducting evaluations	7	Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>		
	c) Professional experience with civil society/church actors	6	Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>		
	d) Relevant language skills	5	Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>		
	e) Relevant regional expertise	5	Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>			Please enter your rating >>		
	Total score: qualification of the evaluator/evaluation team	**30**	**0.00**			**0.00**			**0.00**		

Total score (technical offer and qualification of evaluator(s))				**70**	**0.00**			**0.00**			**0.00**		
Price*	Please enter the total gross price of the least expensive offer received here >>		**Score for total gross price**	**30**	Please enter the total gross price of the offer here >>			Please enter the total gross price of the offer here >>			Please enter the total gross price of the offer here >>		
Total score				**100**	Total score is displayed when the price of the offer and the price of the least expensive offer received are entered			Total score is displayed when the price of the offer and the price of the least expensive offer received are entered			Total score is displayed when the price of the offer and the price of the least expensive offer received are entered		
				Summarising comments									

* Calculation of score for the price: Maximum number of points that can be awarded minus the relative deviation from the lowest offer; if negative = 0

1. The evaluation matrix is a template that can and should be adapted to specific needs.
2. The Excel sheet is protected to prevent inadvertent changes to/deletion of the formulas. If needed, the sheet protection can be removed without a password (click on “Unprotect Sheet” on the tab “Review”).
3. The criteria that are evaluated (columns B-D) should match the information provided in the ToR and be adjusted accordingly. If more criteria need to be added, new lines can be inserted. To do this and to copy/edit the formulas if necessary, the sheet protection must be removed (see 2).
4. The weighting of the criteria can be adjusted. To do so, modify the distribution of the maximum scores to be awarded (column E).
5. The scoring of the price is calculated as follows: The least expensive offer received is awarded the maximum possible score. The other offers receive a lower score depending on their relative deviation from the lowest price. No negative points are awarded.
   Example: The lowest price of EUR 150 was submitted by bidder A and receives the maximum possible score: 30. The next higher price of EUR 200 was submitted by bidder B. It deviates by EUR 50, or 33%, and thus receives 20 score points.
6. The currency can be changed in the cell formatting for the respective cells. The spreadsheet protection must be removed for this purpose (see 2).
7. To assess more than three offers, copy columns F to H before filling them in and insert them to the right as needed. The spreadsheet protection must be removed for this purpose as well (see 2).

Step 5
Concluding the Contract

Key points in brief

1. **The contract bindingly regulates what the contracting parties must fulfil and how, and with respect to which deadlines.**
2. **The ToR and offer must be attached to the contract as annexes.**

Background

The contract is a legally binding document. By signing the contract, the contracting parties accept the conditions and obligations set out therein.

Many organisations have templates for the contract; these templates then only need to be adapted to the respective assignment. This is very helpful, because when formulating a contract, the applicable laws of the country must be taken into account and legally unambiguous wording must be used. In the case of international contracts, for example, if an evaluator is contracted from abroad, it must be ensured that the place of jurisdiction (in other words, the legal system on which the contract is based) is specified.

Both the ToR and the evaluator's offer should be appended to the contract and thus be integral components of it. Guidelines, such as billing specifications, can also be attached.

Purpose

The signing of the contract clearly defines
- what
- by when
- and how (form, features)

the commissioning organisation and the evaluators must fulfil and which fulfilment obligations both sides have. This gives the contracting parties clarity about the assignment, their rights and their obligations.

Approach and involved parties

The contract is concluded between the commissioning organisation and the contractor – in this case, the evaluators. If several external evaluators are subcontracted, care must be taken to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the people involved and who is responsible for submitting the report.

As with all contracts, this contract should also be drawn up and signed in at least duplicate. One copy remains with the commissioning organisation, and one copy is issued to the evaluators.

Checklist for contract creation

Points that should be covered by an evaluation contract:

- [ ] 1. Name, address and contact details of the commissioning organisation
- [ ] 2. Name, address and contact details of the contractor
- [ ] 3. Subject matter of the contract (e.g. evaluation of project XY)
- [ ] 4. Start and end of the contract term
- [ ] 5. Expected products (e.g. inception report, draft evaluation report, final version of the report, summary, etc.) with submission deadlines
- [ ] 6. Regulation of the rights to the products
- [ ] 7. Breakdown of the contract amount by:
    - fee (number of days to be remunerated, daily rate)
    - if applicable, travel expenses and other costs to be reimbursed against receipts
    - any applicable taxes
- [ ] 8. Payment modalities: Deadlines and requirements for payments/instalments and information on payment transactions.
  Note: The final payment should be made only after all agreed products (e.g. final report) have been approved by the commissioning organisation
- [ ] 9. Consequences of non-fulfilment of the contract, whereby a distinction must be made between non-fulfilment of the contract due to third-party fault or force majeure and fault on the part of the contractor
- [ ] 10. Confidentiality (including beyond the end of the contract):
    - the personal rights of people involved in the evaluation must be guaranteed (e.g. by anonymising statements)
    - it must be ensured that documents cannot be viewed by third parties
    - information obtained may not be passed on to third parties without the express written authorisation of the commissioning organisation
- [ ] 11. If applicable, determine whether third parties may be contracted by the contractor for the fulfilment of the contract
- [ ] 12. Regulation regarding whether the contractors and any equipment are insured by the commissioning organisation or whether contractors must insure themselves
- [ ] 13. Note that amendments to contracts or other agreements must be made in writing to be legally valid
- [ ] 14. Determination of the place of jurisdiction
- [ ] 15. Signatures of the contractual partners
- [ ] 16. Appendices: ToR, offer and possibly other regulations (e.g. travel expense guidelines, code of conduct, confirmation of the evaluators' independence)

Step 6
Kick-Off and Clarification Meeting

Key points in brief

1. **The kick-off and clarification meeting is held between the commissioning organisation and the evaluators before the evaluation begins.**
2. **The objectives, specifications, possibilities and limitations of the evaluation can and should be discussed openly during the kick-off and clarification meeting.**
3. **Prepare a results protocol!**

Background

In the kick-off and clarification meeting, the contracting parties discuss the information set out in the ToR in greater detail and have the opportunity to ask questions. Initial information, such as basic documents and contact details, are handed over.

Purpose

A clear and detailed meeting clarifying the assignment should take place at the beginning of the cooperation **after** the contract has been signed. In particular, all questions relating to the ToR, as well as expectations and logistics issues, must be addressed. Doing so avoids conflicts, leads to constructive, goal-oriented cooperation and promotes both parties' understanding of the possibilities and limitations of the other party. If, for example, the evaluators believe that individual questions from the ToR cannot be answered, this should be discussed and documented.

Approach and involved parties

The parties directly involved – representatives of the commissioning organisation and the evaluators – should take part in the kick-off and clarification meeting. Depending on the objectives and scope of the evaluation, other project stakeholders may be invited, e.g. representatives of target groups, funding organisations or support structures such as CSS (Consultancy and Support Services). An agenda including the objectives of the kick-off and clarification meeting should be sent to the participants in advance.

The kick-off and clarification meeting and the handover of documents and data (e.g. project reports, target group data) should always take place after the contract has been signed in order to ensure confidentiality.

Notes

- It is helpful to ask the evaluators to present their provisional evaluation design to the stakeholders.
- Keeping a short record of the most important points discussed during the meeting is advisable.
- Even after the kick-off and clarification meeting, a continuous dialogue between the commissioning organisation and the evaluators is important to ensure that the evaluation proceeds smoothly.
- Some sensitive topics, e.g. conflicts, cannot be included in the ToR. However, they should be discussed in the kick-off and clarification meeting.

Checklist for a kick-off and clarification meeting

A sufficient amount of time must be scheduled for the meeting, as other questions and issues requiring clarification frequently arise. The following list contains questions that you can use to structure your kick-off and clarification meeting. They are optional and only serve as an aid.

- [ ] 1. What basic information (e.g. vision, mission, size) about the **commissioning organisation** is useful for the evaluators?
- [ ] 2. What exactly is the **object of evaluation** (e.g. project, instrument, several projects, a specific project component, etc.)? Which **period** should be considered? Who are the **project parties**? What are the **framework conditions**?
- [ ] 3. What exactly do the commissioning or funding organisations want to achieve through the evaluation (**objective**)? Why is there an interest in the results? Why now (**cause**)?
- [ ] 4. What exactly will the results be used for (**use**)? Who should use the results (**addressees of the recommendations**)?
- [ ] 5. Which baseline data, monitoring data and evaluations already exist within this project or from previous projects (previous products)?
- [ ] 6. What must be avoided or considered at all costs during the evaluation (critical topics, cultural taboos, etc.)?
- [ ] 7. Which **methods** should be used to collect the data?
- [ ] 8. Which groups/people should be consulted regarding their perspectives on the project or framework conditions (e.g. government representatives, other organisations)?
- [ ] 9. Discussion/clarification of the **evaluation questions.** Is anything **unclear?** Which **results** can probably **not be delivered** (due to external framework conditions)? What might need to be **adapted** to produce the results? Do any questions need to be removed or reformulated?
- [ ] 10. If an evaluation team is used: Have the **roles and responsibilities** been clarified?
- [ ] 11. When should products be submitted (**deadlines,** including for interim results)? Have the **deadlines for comments** been clarified by the commissioning organisation (e.g. inception report or draft evaluation report)?
- [ ] 12. Is the planned **time frame** of the evaluation realistic, and has it been agreed with everyone involved (e.g. target groups, other project stakeholders)? Are adjustments necessary?
- [ ] 13. What support do the evaluators need in terms of **logistics, transport, accommodation, translation, etc.**? Who is **responsible** for that?

- [ ] 14. Which **specifications** (general quality requirements and formal stipulations, e.g. from the funding organisation(s)) must be complied with?

- [ ] 15. Are there any **open points regarding the contract,** e.g. on **billing** (what is required for the billing process, which receipts are to be submitted, deadlines, etc.) or the **confidentiality clause?**

- [ ] 16. Next steps: Who communicates with whom (e.g. **who at the commissioning organisation is responsible** for announcing and introducing the evaluators, e.g. to target groups and other project parties)? From whom do the evaluators receive the necessary documents and data?

Step 7
Inception Report

Key points in brief

1. **The inception report describes the assignment, the evaluation methods, the schedule and possible restrictions.**
2. **After the ToR and the kick-off and clarification meeting, the inception report is the written and binding "roadmap" for carrying out the evaluation.**
3. **The inception report is prepared by the evaluators. It can be prepared as a report or in another form. It is important that the commissioning organisation approves its content.**

Background

In the inception report,

- the assignment is set out again, and the object of evaluation and its evaluation questions are specified,
- the methodology to be used is described in detail,
- an evaluation matrix and drafts of data collection instruments such as questionnaires and interview guidelines are presented,
- any restrictions and difficulties that may arise are recorded,
- a detailed schedule is drawn up.

Purpose

The inception report is crucial for carrying out an evaluation. It can ensure that the assignment has been properly understood and the evaluation can be conducted with the intensity and quality that correspond to the standards of the commissioning organisation and, if relevant, the funding organisation. In the inception report, the evaluators can also indicate their needs regarding required documents and possible support with transport, logistics, etc.

Possible difficulties and limitations can also be identified, e.g. it can be noted that certain evaluation questions cannot be answered.

An evaluation matrix should be part of the inception report. It presents the sources of information and methods used to answer the individual evaluation questions. There are various ways of presenting the evaluation matrix. There is a sample structure for an inception report with an evaluation matrix at the end of step 7.

Approach and involved parties

The inception report is prepared by the evaluators after the kick-off and clarification meeting and after they have examined basic documents. The commissioning organisation approves the inception report in writing within an agreed period. External consultants such as CSS (Consultancy and Support Services) may provide support. They can support the assessment of the suitability of the proposed data collection methods, instruments and evaluation methods.

Notes

- An inception report does not contain any evaluation results, but it may include initial analyses of the object of evaluation.
- Allowing sufficient time for commenting on the inception report and the acceptance process is recommended.

Links

AF-TERG (2024): Guidance Note: Inception Report. Adaptation Fund Technical Evaluation Reference Group (AF-TERG) (English)
www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/AFBEFC.318Add.6-02.13.24.pdf

International Labour Organization (2022): Checklist 4.8: Writing the Inception Report (English)
www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_mas/@eval/documents/publication/wcms_746817.pdf

Welthungerhilfe: Evaluation Management Manual. Step 06: Inception Report (English, French)
www.welthungerhilfe.de/evaluation-management-manual
www.welthungerhilfe.de/manuel-de-levaluation

Useful links on data collection methods/instruments:
INTRAC (2019): M&E Universe: Data collection
www.intrac.org/resources/me-universe-data-collection/

Community Sustainability Engagement: Evaluation Toolbox (English)
https://evaluationtoolbox.net.au

Brot für die Welt partner organisations can find more information on this topic in the online basic course on external project evaluations. Information about access to the course is provided in the *info sheet*. The basic course is part of the Brot für die Welt learning portal:
https://ewde-elearning.de/

Word document download

Sample structure

Inception report for evaluations

1. **Brief overview of the project to be evaluated and its context**
   - Background information on the project to be evaluated
   - Objective(s), target groups and central activities of the project
   - Contextual conditions of the project

2. **Evaluation objective and purpose, scope and central questions of the evaluation**

3. **Understanding of the object of evaluation**
   - Strategies and approaches of the project to be evaluated
   - Cause-effect model/Theory of Change of the project

4. **Evaluation concept and methods**
   - Data collection methods for answering the evaluation questions
   - Qualitative and quantitative analysis procedures
   - Sampling procedure/selection of people to be consulted
   - Possible risks in carrying out the evaluation and measures to minimise risks

5. **Schedule and activity plan for carrying out the evaluation**
   - Detailed schedule for data collection, analyses and reporting
   - If applicable, schedule for on-site visits for collecting data
   - If necessary, detailed workplan and division of work within the team

Annexes

Annex A "Evaluation matrix"

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions	Specification of evaluation questions and sub-questions	Indicators/ criteria for the assessment	Information sources	Data collection methods
Relevance					
Coherence					
Effectiveness					
Efficiency					
Impact					
Sustainability					

Annex B "Drafts of the data collection instruments" (e.g. questionnaires and interview guidelines)
Annex C "Preliminary table of contents of the evaluation report"
Annex D "Bibliography"

Step 8
Support During Data Collection

Key points in brief

1. **The evaluators must be provided with access to relevant stakeholders and data sources.**
2. **The logistics of data collection should be agreed between the evaluators and the commissioning organisation.**
3. **A safety briefing should take place in contexts with safety or security issues.**

Background

For successful data collection, the contextual conditions must be taken into account, and the logistics must be well prepared. For this reason, agreements on responsibilities, safety precautions and rules of conduct must be made in advance between the evaluators and the commissioning organisations. The commissioning organisation should share relevant information with the evaluators, provide contact details and, where appropriate, provide logistical support for the process.

Purpose

Supporting the evaluators during data collection has three functions:

1. ensuring that the evaluators have access to the relevant knowledge carriers, actors and data sources, and guaranteeing the data collection proceeds as smoothly as possible.
2. increasing the willingness and motivation of the relevant project parties to express their opinions and views on the project in interviews and discussions. This includes informing the persons to be consulted in advance about the purpose of the evaluation and determining suitable appointment dates and locations.
3. ensuring the safety of the evaluators and all persons involved in the evaluation during the data collection phase to the greatest extent possible.

Approach and involved parties

Data collection is the responsibility of the evaluators. The commissioning organisations and the evaluators should agree on how to coordinate logistics, appointments, transport and contact with their dialogue partners. Suitable locations for conducting interviews and workshops must also be identified. A contact from the project team or the commissioning organisation should be available to the evaluators during data collection in order to discuss and coordinate any changes to agreed procedures.

If the data collection is carried out in areas with safety or security issues, agreements on safety precautions should also be made and, if necessary, a contact person for emergencies should be arranged.

Notes

- It is important that everyone involved in the evaluation understands that the evaluation is an opportunity to improve the project or future projects.
- If group discussions/interviews or workshops are organised, the evaluators and the commissioning organisation should discuss the participants and group size together.
- If translators are required, they should not be involved in the project, and they should be impartial.
- Employees of the project to be evaluated should not be present during interviews with target groups and other stakeholders, as their presence could influence the content of the discussions.

Link

Welthungerhilfe: Evaluation Management Manual. Step 07: Field Phase – Data Collection and Analysis (English, French)
www.welthungerhilfe.de/evaluation-management-manual
www.welthungerhilfe.de/manuel-de-levaluation

Step 9

Discussion of Preliminary Evaluation Results

Key points in brief

1. **Preliminary evaluation results should be discussed and verified with the people involved in the evaluation.**
2. **Discussing the preliminary results can eliminate factually inaccurate information and avoid ambiguities and misunderstanding of data.**

Background

When the preliminary evaluation results are discussed, the evaluators present the preliminary results and their conclusions to the project parties and the commissioning organisations, and they discuss and verify the results with these parties. On this basis, necessary changes, clarifications and/or important points of discussion are incorporated into the evaluation report.

Purpose

Discussing the preliminary evaluation results has the following functions:

- The people involved in the project draw their own conclusions from the results and share their views on the preliminary conclusions and recommendations.
- The project parties and other persons involved in the evaluation have the opportunity to correct misunderstandings or incorrect information.
- The evaluators can address points that are still unclear to them and obtain further information that is relevant to the evaluation.

Approach and involved parties

Different stakeholders may be involved in discussing the preliminary results:

- employees of the project and the commissioning organisation,
- target groups/project parties,
- other people involved in the evaluation (e.g. employees of organisations working on similar topics, funding organisations, government representatives).

If an evaluation support team has been set up to manage and support the evaluation process, the members of this team should participate in the discussion of the preliminary results. Ideally, all of the people who were involved in the evaluation should be invited to the discussion.

If there are plans for external consultants, such as CSS (Consultancy and Support Services), to be involved in using the results and recommendations, they should already be involved in this step of the process.

A time window lasting between two hours and one working day should be planned for discussing the preliminary results, depending on whether recommendations are to be jointly developed as well. The commissioning organisation is responsible for informing the relevant parties about the appointment and inviting them in good time.

! Notes

- The commissioning organisation and the evaluators should agree on who will be involved in the discussion.
- Why the preliminary evaluation results are being discussed jointly should be clearly communicated at the beginning. The purpose is not to water down critical evaluation results. The atmosphere of the discussion should express openness to criticism and a willingness to reflect and learn.
- The commissioning organisations and the evaluators should agree on the form of presentation and discussion of the preliminary results in advance.

Links

Welthungerhilfe: Evaluation Management Manual. Step 08: Conduct debriefing (English, French)
www.welthungerhilfe.de/evaluation-management-manual
www.welthungerhilfe.de/manuel-de-levaluation

Gullickson, A.; Stufflebeam, D. L. (2001): Feedback Workshop Checklist (English)
www.wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u350/2014/feedbackworkshop.pdf

Step 10

Assessment of the Evaluation Report

Key points in brief

1. **Formal and content-related specifications of the ToR should be complied with in the evaluation report.**
2. **The draft evaluation report can and should be commented on.**
3. **The evaluators must change factually incorrect statements.**

Background

The evaluators submit the evaluation report as a draft, which is then read by all relevant stakeholders (including the funding organisations), commented on and returned to the evaluators for revision. A lack of analytical detail can be criticised, and the evaluators may be asked to deepen their analyses. Any minimum formal requirements for the report, e.g. the existence of an executive summary, should also be checked. Commenting on the draft of the report requires time and consultation among those involved.

Purpose

This step has the function of reviewing the factual accuracy and completeness of statements and descriptions and, if necessary, correcting or supplementing them. In addition, whether the quality requirements for an evaluation and the evaluation report have been taken into account should be critically examined. In particular, this involves checking whether the questions from the ToR have been answered and whether the procedure agreed upon in the inception report has been complied with. The assessments and conclusions are the responsibility of the independent evaluators.

Approach and involved parties

The draft of the evaluation report is read and commented on in writing by the commissioning organisation at a minimum. Ideally, the report should be read and commented on by all those people who are to continue working with the evaluation results and recommendations and benefit from them. The evaluators must adequately consider the comments in the evaluation report. The evaluation report is then approved by the commissioning organisation.

The contact person at the commissioning organisation should coordinate and collect feedback on the draft report and, if necessary, clarify conflicting comments in advance. The sample grid below can be used to assess the evaluation report. It can be shared with the evaluators as a guide.

Notes

Only evaluation reports that are in the draft stage can be commented on and changed by the evaluators. Once the evaluation report has been formally accepted, no further changes are possible.

Links

Better Evaluation: Reporting (English, French)
www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/managers-guide-evaluation/reporting

AF-TERG (2024): Guidance Note: Evaluation Reporting. Adaptation Fund Technical Evaluation Reference Group (AF-TERG) (English)
www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2023-03-06-AFBEFC.31.8.Add_.3-EPG-Development-Annex-3-Draft-GN-Eval-Budgeting.pdf

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Sample form for assessing evaluation reports

No.	Criterion	Assessment			Comments
	Formal criteria	**Yes**	**No**	**Partially**	
1	Includes a cover sheet	☐	☐		
2	The cover sheet contains the following information: ▪ Project title	☐	☐		
	▪ Project number	☐	☐		
	▪ Project implementing organisation	☐	☐		
	▪ Name of the evaluator(s)/of the team members (authors)	☐	☐		
	▪ Date of the report	☐	☐		
	▪ Region/Country	☐	☐		
	▪ Version of the report (e.g. draft or final evaluation report)	☐	☐		
3	Contains a table of contents with page numbers	☐	☐		
4	Contains a list of abbreviations	☐	☐		
5	Contains a summary with a description of the object of evaluation (e.g. the project to be evaluated) and main results and recommendations	☐	☐	☐	
6	The appendix includes the ToR, a list of persons interviewed, documents and data sources viewed, the timeline, a Theory of Change (ToC) (if applicable) or a logframe and the data collection instruments	☐	☐	☐	
7	The font and text size are appropriate. Texts, images and other graphic elements are properly arranged	☐	☐	☐	
8	Clear language, attention was paid to spelling and grammar, the report is generally easy to read	☐	☐	☐	
9	The length of the report is appropriate: only as long as necessary to present facts, findings and recommendations in a comprehensible manner	☐	☐	☐	

No.	Content-related criteria	Yes	No	Partially	Comments
10	The structure of the report is logical and comprehensible	☐	☐	☐	
11	All questions from the ToR have been answered. Any deviations are mentioned and sufficiently justified	☐	☐	☐	

12	The object and goals of the evaluation are described comprehensibly	☐	☐	☐	
13	Agreed DAC criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and/or sustainability) are addressed	☐	☐	☐	
14	Agreed cross-cutting issues have been considered (e.g. gender, environmental impact, inclusion)	☐	☐	☐	
15	Statements from and views of the interviewed stakeholders have been anonymised	☐	☐	☐	
16	Positions and perspectives of the interviewed stakeholders are presented in a neutral and balanced manner	☐	☐	☐	
17	Where possible and expedient, data are presented in a disaggregated manner (for example, by gender or age)	☐	☐	☐	
18	The method of data collection and analysis is described transparently. Associated restrictions of the assessment are mentioned	☐	☐	☐	
19	Results are justified and relate to the evaluation questions and the object of evaluation	☐	☐	☐	
20	Recommendations ▪ are clearly separated from the results, i.e. in a separate section	☐	☐	☐	
	▪ are clearly based on certain results and address identified potentials or risks	☐	☐	☐	
	▪ are addressed	☐	☐	☐	
	▪ are specific and feasible/realistic	☐	☐	☐	
	▪ are feasible in terms of their quantity	☐	☐	☐	
	▪ are prioritised	☐	☐	☐	

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Sample structure of the evaluation report

The points listed below are the minimum components of an evaluation report.
Where appropriate, cross-cutting issues should be considered.

Cover sheet

- Project title
- Project number
- Project implementing organisation
- Evaluators (authors)
- Date of the report
- Region/Country
- Duration of the project, if applicable

Table of contents

List of abbreviations

Executive summary

- Short presentation of the object of evaluation, if appropriate, including important context conditions
- Brief information on the evaluation: Cause and objective, period of the evaluation
- Main evaluation results
- Main recommendations

---

1. Brief description of the object of evaluation

- Project(s) or project components that were evaluated (e.g. project strategies, project objectives, target groups)
- Implementing organisation, duration, funding organisations
- Time of the evaluation in the course of the project

---

2. Context conditions (only as far as they are relevant for the object of evaluation)

- Political, economic, ecological, social and social-cultural factors that facilitate or hinder the project's success
- Relevant activities carried out by other organisations (e.g. government, civil society and private sector representatives)
- Role of state stakeholders

---

3. Description of the evaluation and the methodology used

- Method of data collection and analysis
- Groups of people involved, number of persons involved (sample and sampling procedure)
- Limitations of the methodology used and implications for the results of the evaluation

---

4. Results (along the evaluation criteria mentioned in the ToR)
- 4.1 Relevance
- 4.2 Coherence
- 4.3 Effectiveness
- 4.4 Efficiency
- 4.5 Effects on development (Impact)
- 4.6 Sustainability

---

5. Conclusions (lessons learned)

---

6. Recommendations (based on results, realistic, specific, and addressed)

---

7. Annex
- Terms of Reference
- Timeline and workflow
- Sources (interview partners, project documents viewed and specialised literature)
- Evaluation matrix
- Data collection instruments (e.g. questionnaires and interview guidelines)
- Detailed, disaggregated data analyses as needed (tables and graphics)
- As appropriate, Theory of Change (ToC) or logframe of the project, as well as additional relevant presentations/depictions

Step 11

Communication and Use of the Evaluation Results and Recommendations

Key points in brief

1. **Evaluation results and recommendations should be shared with relevant stakeholders in an appropriate form.**
2. **The results and recommendations should be reflected upon and discussed with different stakeholder groups.**
3. **How accepted evaluation recommendations are addressed should be recorded in an implementation plan.**

Background

The main added value of evaluations develops through their use, the resulting learning and the associated improvement of projects. Communication and usage of the evaluation results are closely related. During the evaluation planning phase, the commissioning organisation should already consider who should be informed about the evaluation results and recommendations later on and which forms of communication are suitable for which addressees. Evaluation results and recommendations should be shared not only with parties directly involved in the project, but also with other stakeholders (e.g. interested members of the public, funding organisations). In addition to communicating the evaluation results, discussing the recommendations is important.

Purpose

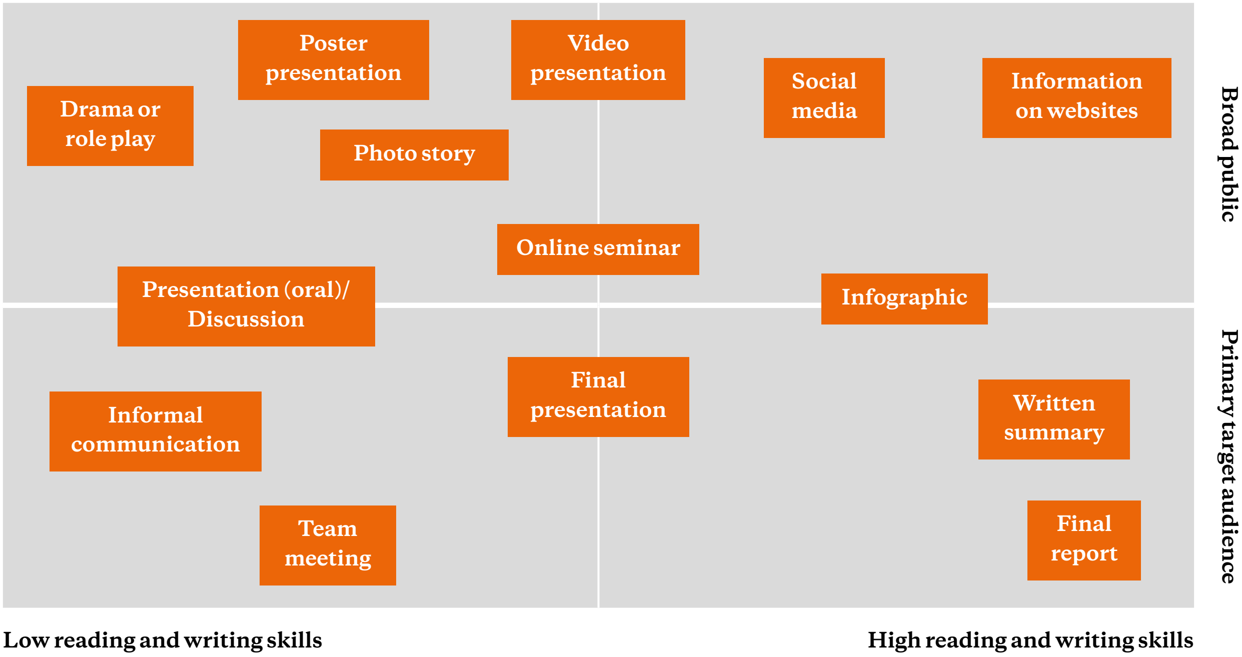
The objective of this step is using evaluations for managing, learning and reporting purposes. Recommendations and results can and should be taken into account when adjustments are made during the course of the project and/or when follow-up projects are designed.

Approach and involved parties

Those involved in the project (including representatives of the target group, the partner organisation and the funding organisation) should be given the opportunity to reflect upon and discuss the evaluation results and recommendations. The form and content of communication depend on the addressees. Their respective communication preferences should be taken into account when means of communication are selected. Consideration should also be given to how information can be transmitted barrier-free and, for example, made accessible to interested parties with hearing or visual impairments. The following diagram shows methods that can be used to convey evaluation results to different groups of addressees.

In addition to the classic evaluation report, results and recommendations can also be communicated through infographics, by writing short messages in newsletters, using websites or in visual forms such as video messages and posters.

Communication of evaluation results (selection of options)



Source: Own compilation

At the end of each evaluation process, an implementation plan should be drawn up that defines how and by whom the accepted evaluation recommendations will be implemented, over what period of time and who will support the implementation process. If individual recommendations are not accepted or only partially accepted by the participants, this should be briefly explained and documented (see the sample implementation plan at the end of step 11). Prioritising the defined implementation steps according to their importance is recommended. In some cases, it is possible to derive further needs for action beyond the recommendations from the evaluation results. They should then also be included in the implementation plan. The commissioning organisation and all relevant stakeholders to whom the recommendations are addressed should be involved in creating the implementation plan.

External consultants, e.g. CSS (Consultancy and Support Services), can help the commissioning organisation in learning workshops and in developing the implementation plan.

! Notes

- Learning does not take place only at the end of an evaluation. Regular reflection on monitoring and evaluation data is important. Integrating learning events into the project cycle is crucial.
- Where possible, recommendations should be integrated into planning or strategy documents.
- Sufficient time, personnel and financial resources should be planned for the process of implementing evaluation recommendations.
- Additional costs for communicating and discussing the evaluation results (e.g. for event, printing and translation costs) must be considered in the project budget.

Links

Better Evaluation (2018): Three templates for effective communications planning (English)
www.betterevaluation.org/blog/three-templates-for-effective-communications-planning

CIPP (2017): Effectively Communicating Evaluation Findings (English)
https://cippsite.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/CIPP-TA-Product-Effectively-Communicating-Evaluation-Findings.pdf

O'Neil, Glenn (2017): A Guide: Integrating communication in evaluation (English)
www.owlre.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/A_guide_integrating_communication_in_evaluation_FINAL.pdf

Better Evaluation: Support the use of evaluation findings (English, French)
www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/managers-guide-evaluation/distribution-learnings/support-use-evaluation-findings

Brot für die Welt partner organisations can find more information on this topic in the online course on the basics of external project evaluations. Information about access to the course can be found in the *info sheet*. The basic course is part of the Brot für die Welt learning portal:
https://ewde-elearning.de/

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Sample implementation plan

Date:	
Title of the evaluation:	
Overall responsibility/leadership at the commissioning organisation:	
Date of the evaluation report:	
Persons involved in the creation of the implementation plan:	
Person responsible for monitoring the implementation plan:	

Brief information on the object of evaluation: *[important especially if the evaluation had a specific focus, only parts of a project were evaluated, or the evaluation was a cross-cutting or instrument evaluation]*

Recommendations from the evaluation report/results that require action	**Recommendation accepted?**			**If "yes": Mention important substeps for implementing the recommendation** **If "partially" or "no": Justify why the recommendation cannot be implemented and provide alternate recommendations as needed (with partial steps)**	**(by) when (M/Y)**	**Responsible party/ person**	**Monitoring: Implementation status**
	yes	partially	no				
Recommendation 1: *[text/citation from the evaluation report]*							
Recommendation 2: *[text/citation from the evaluation report]*							
Recommendation 3: *[text/citation from the evaluation report]*							
Recommendation 4: *[text/citation from the evaluation report]*							
Recommendation 5: *[text/citation from the evaluation report]*							
⋮							

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