

# Evaluation Design

*Start with clear intended project impacts. Working back in a disciplined and systematic way, you can define project goals and strategies to effectively achieve them...*

NSF Guide to Program Evaluation

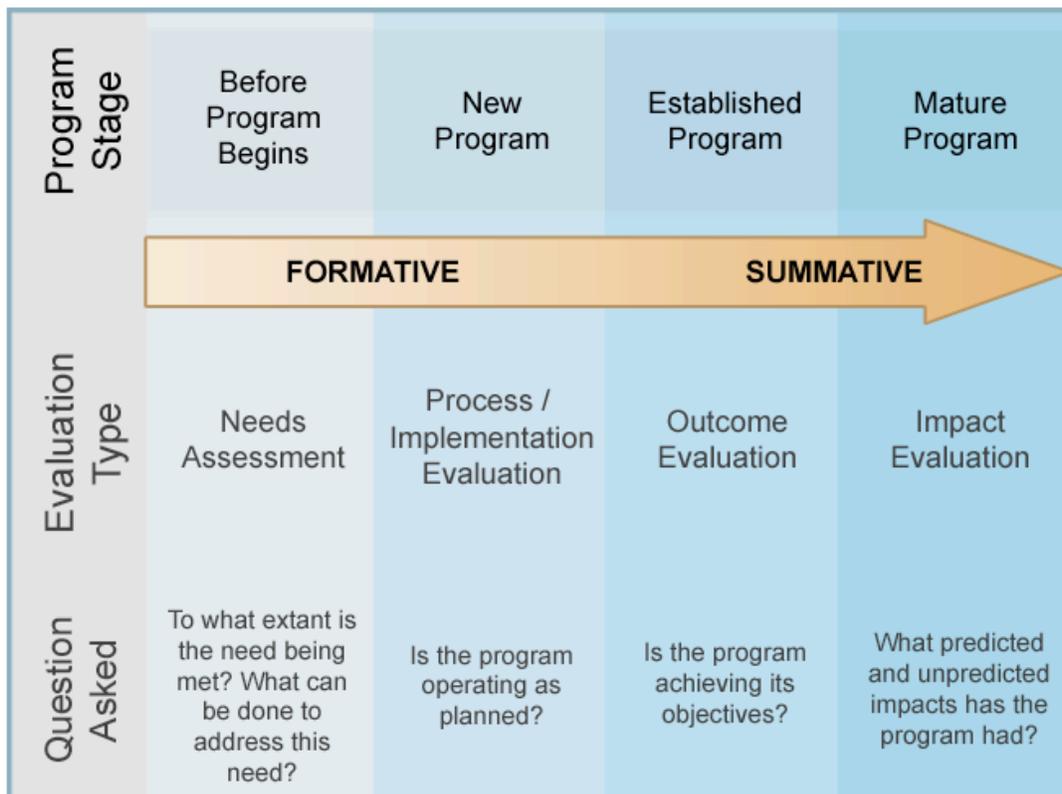
## Guidelines

- There are several kinds of evaluation design.
- Evaluation questions focus the evaluation study.
- The evaluation plan tracks activities and measures outcomes and impact.

Evaluation takes a team. It is important to define the roles of each team member.

Member	Role
Principal Investigator	Oversees proposal, implementation, and submitting annual reports. Ultimate responsibility.
Project Coordinator	Oversees administrative and fiscal functions. Key person.
Internal Evaluator	Conducts interviews and surveys, gathers and analyzes data.
External Evaluator	Designs and guides evaluation. Reviews internal findings. Conducts external studies. Acts as counsel for PI. Reports to funder.

## Evaluation Stages



Different types of evaluation are used at different stages of the project.

## Evaluation Tool Kit

### Evaluation Questions

*Evaluation questions provide a direction and framework. They state what you want to learn to and help you make decisions. They must be stated in terms you can measure.*

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### Guidelines

1. What do you want to know? (How will evaluation improve your project?)
2. Who cares? (What stakeholders will benefit?)
3. What measures? Funders want real data that matters.

Writing high-quality evaluation questions is a learned skill reflecting best practices. Just like writing test and quiz questions, it is easy to write bad evaluation questions.

Every evaluation, like any other research project, starts with one or more questions. Sometimes the questions will be simple, but more often they will be complex with difficult-to-find answers. The choice of questions guides the evaluation and defines what you are trying to do, what you will measure, and the impact you hope your project has.

Evaluation involves gathering information in order to understand and make judgments about the project and its outcomes. Evaluation questions reflect the purpose and scope of the evaluation.

By framing questions carefully, you can evaluate different parts of your effort.

Evaluation questions help you to:

1. Clearly define what it is you're trying to do
2. Understand what effects different parts of the project are having
3. See where you need to make changes
4. Highlight unintended consequences
5. Guide future choices

Question Type	Purpose and Examples
<i>Descriptive</i>	<p>Helps you understand and explain the characteristics of your project. Provides a simple snapshot.</p> <p>Asks: Who? What? Where? When? How many or how much?</p> <p>Describe inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">How many students were served or products produced?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What learning outcomes occurred as a result of the project?</p>
<i>Normative</i>	<p>Helps you compare what was promised to what was produced. Compares “what is” to “what was proposed.”</p> <p>Measure against stated criteria.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What (processes, products, services) were planned and what were actually put in place for the project?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What did we spend our budget on?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Which expenditures were as proposed and in keeping with funder requirements?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What is the efficacy of activities intended to recruit underrepresented groups?</p>
<i>Cause and Effect</i>	<p>Helps you to determine the impact or effect of the project. Determines if the project achieved the desired results.</p> <p>Measures what changed as a result of the project.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What new skills do learners demonstrate as a result of the project?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What kinds of careers or further study do learners get or pursue after graduation?</p>

Different types of evaluation questions describe or measure different things.

## Evaluation Tool Kit

### Evaluation Design

*Use the most rigorous study designs that are best suited to the nature of the project and its intended outcomes...*

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### Guidelines

1. There are several types of evaluation design
2. Logic models plan the steps to reach a goal
3. Theory of Change starts with a goal and works backwards

Developing an evaluation plan is a lot like designing a research strategy. You state a problem or goal and then develop a disciplined plan to investigate one or more questions. Appropriate research methods and metrics capture data, document results, and allow analysis and reporting.

**Evaluation Designs** are the framework of the evaluation plan. There are several types of evaluation designs and degrees of rigor. Here is a list of common study types:

- Randomized Control Trial with Comparison Group
- Experimental Studies
  - Post only
  - Pre and Post Test
  - Pre, Intermediate, and Post Test
- Quasi Experimental study
- Ethnography
- Case Study
- Content Analysis
- Mixed Methods

[University of Michigan - Types of Evaluation Designs](#)

**Logic Models** are used as a means to develop evaluation metrics.

A logic model or logic map is a schematic representation of your project. It is a visual representation of the relationship between the various components or activities of your project.

These components usually include program inputs, actions, short term and intermediate outcomes, and overall program outcomes.

The logic map provides clarity about how planned project activities will fulfill the project goals. It is difficult to evaluate success without a clear expectation of what is supposed to happen...and why. The logic map defines what you want to do, how you proposed to do and the measurable outcomes that will document your progress.

Logic Map Element	Explanation
Inputs	Resources and needs the project draws upon.
Actions/Strategies	What the project will do. Actions to achieve goals.
Goals/Objectives/Outcomes	Each action has a measurable result. These results meet short or intermediate term goals or outcomes.
Project Goal and Impact	The final outcome you hope to achieve. Project impact.

**Theory of Change** defines the steps, actions required to achieve a long-term goal or broader impact.

A theory of change is a pathway. It is a map or flowchart that describes the steps in an intervention or project that lead to outcomes. It articulates strategies, tactics, and actions, and illustrates how they are expected to lead to the intended results.

A theory of change identifies a long-term goal and then works backwards to define outcomes leading to that goal, interventions or actions to create those outcomes, and the indicators of progress.

Theory of Change Element	Explanation
Long Term Goals	Agree on specific long-term goals or impacts.
Outcomes	Describe the outcomes needed to achieve the goal.
Interventions	Define the actions needed to bring about each short or intermediate term outcome.
Indicators	Identify measurable data points to assess the performance of the interventions.

Theory of Change - [The Harvard Family Research Project Evaluation Exchange](#)