

Nine Points to Consider When Contemplating an Evaluation

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1. Why do you want to do a program evaluation? Ask yourself: why is it important to you and your organization that you initiate an evaluation now?
2. Who is going to use the evaluation information (executive director, board, funders, staff, members, clients, etc.)? For whom are you completing the evaluation? To which person(s) will the evaluators be accountable?
3. Are you interested in evaluating how your program works, or its impact -- or both? Be specific! Which potential positive impacts do you want to know more about? Which potential negative impacts concern you?
4. How will the evaluation findings be used? What will you know after the evaluation that you don't know now? What will you be able to accomplish using the evaluation information that you can't accomplish now?
5. How will staff/board members/executive director/others be involved? How much time will they spend? Are you intending the evaluation process to have a particular effect on board, staff, or funders?
6. Are there resources/funds available to do an evaluation? Do you have individual skills, contacts, in-kind donations, creativity, and other sources of funding? Or can you include the cost of an evaluation in a program proposal?
7. What is the time frame for this evaluation? When should the evaluation begin? When should you have the final report?
8. Is an outside evaluator needed? Does this evaluator have experience with organizations and programs like yours? Does this evaluator produce useful reports?
9. What do you want included in the final report? Do you want an explanation of the underlying academic principles used by the evaluator? Do you want just conclusions and recommendations?