



Webinar Handout | Webinar recording and slides are also available from evalu-ate.org/events/nov_2013

Questions, Data, Conclusions, Recommendations: Connecting the Dots for an Effective Evaluation



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EVALUATION QUESTIONS: Overarching questions about a project’s merit, worth, or significance that the evaluation seeks to answer based on evidence

When developing evaluation questions, consider the program **funder’s requirements/expectations for evaluation**, the project’s **goals**, and **stakeholders’** information needs. Evaluation questions may also be informed by **external criteria** for the type of project being conducted, the **needs** of the project’s target audience, and the project’s **logic model**. Sound evaluation questions will enhance an evaluation’s utility, feasibility, propriety, accuracy, and accountability, which are the domains that define evaluation quality, according to the **Program Evaluation Standards**: www.jcsee.org.

For more on the role of goals in focusing an evaluation, read *Essentials of Utilization-Focused Evaluation*, by Michael Quinn Patton (2012), pp. 205-208.

Generally accepted, authoritative, research-based criteria can provide insights about how to focus evaluation questions and are especially helpful for process evaluation. In the webinar, we provided several examples, such as criteria and standards for educator professional development (learningforward.org), engineering and technology certification and degree programs (abet.org), and automotive technician programs (natef.org).

For more about what constitutes a sound evaluation question, see the Evaluation Questions Checklist by Lori Wingate and Daniela Schroeter at <http://bit.ly/1aFcpOY>.

See edtechevaluation.com, for additional guidance on identifying evaluation questions and aligning data, conclusions, and recommendations to those questions.

DATA: Factual information that will be used to formulate answers to the evaluation questions	CONCLUSIONS: Answers to the evaluation questions	RECOMMENDATIONS: Actions proposed for improving a project based on evidence from the evaluation
<p>(1) Before planning data collection, determine what indicators will help answer the evaluation questions. (2) Determine how data for the indicators will be collected. (3) Think ahead to how data may need to be combined to generate credible evidence to inform conclusions.</p> <p>For guidance on selecting indicators that will yield evidence needed to answer evaluation questions, see Goldie MacDonald’s “Criteria for Selection of High-Performing Indicators: A Checklist to Inform Monitoring and Evaluation”: http://bit.ly/1fSXu5H.</p> <p>NSF’s <i>Framework for Evaluating Impacts of Broadening Participation Projects</i> provides guidance on what metrics and indicators to use when assessing efforts to increase the representation of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities in STEM: http://1.usa.gov/1h1cXDF.</p>	<p>Conclusions should align semantically with evaluation questions: If an evaluation question asks about effectiveness, the conclusions should be presented in terms of effectiveness.</p> <p>Only ask questions that call for conclusions regarding causation if you will be able to meet methodological conditions necessary for determining attribution. To learn more about how to reach conclusions regarding attribution v. contribution, see the slides and notes from the CDC Coffee Break webinar on this topic: http://1.usa.gov/1fe6pRG</p> <p>Rubrics are helpful for translating evaluation results into meaningful conclusions. See Jane Davidson’s blog entry on this topic, which includes links to more resources: http://aea365.org/blog/?p=1537.</p>	<p>See p. 42 of the webinar slides for 14 tips for developing, presenting, and follow-up on evaluation recommendations: evalu-ate.org/events/nov_2013.</p> <p>For a more in-depth look at making recommendations, check out the slides from Lori Wingate and Daniela’s Schroeter’s CDC workshop on Translating Evaluation Findings into Action: http://bit.ly/1bO42BT.</p> <p>The United National Development Programme has developed a Management Response Rate to facilitate implementation of evaluation recommendations: http://bit.ly/19Egcs0.</p>