

# 4. Evaluation Fact Sheet<sup>\*</sup>

## Why, When and How?

Evaluation is one of the most often overlooked aspects of community development projects or programs.

Faced with tight budgets, restricted capacity and short timelines, evaluation may be viewed as a luxury that cannot be afforded or implemented.

Evaluation, however, is often a requirement for funding from federal and territorial sources.

A well done evaluation can enhance project efficiency and increase the overall effectiveness of any effort. Evaluation can result in continual project improvement and can help justify future funding.

Evaluation provides an important tool that allows First Nations to learn from any project, policy or program.

### Evaluation can help answer these questions:

- Did the project succeed?
- Is the policy working?
- Did others value our program?
- Did the workshop get its intended results?
- What do we need to change?
- How can we do this better?

This fact sheet provides some general information to help Yukon First Nations develop evaluations.

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<sup>\*</sup> Funding for this project was provided by Health Canada through the Aboriginal Health Transition Fund. The opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors/researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official views of Health Canada or the Council of Yukon First Nations. The information in this document can be shared and used for non-commercial purposes only.

## Why Evaluate?

Evaluation helps us to:

- Understand if goals and objectives were achieved.
- Determine if resources were spent wisely.
- Increase efficiency or continuously improve and develop the quality of a product, service, concept or initiative.
- Understand barriers to success and useful opportunities in order to determine “lessons learned.”
- Develop recommendations to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in future efforts.
- Avoid mistakes in future projects.
- Demonstrate project success to ensure funding is maintained.
- Justify further funding or support for other initiatives.

## What is Evaluation?

Evaluation is the systemic collection of information on the performance of a project, policy, program, event or initiative at a specific point in time.

Evaluation allows us to make informed judgements and decisions about current and future project efforts.

## When to Evaluate?

Evaluation can occur at any point in the project cycle.

Individual aspects of the project or program, such as workshops and seminars, may be evaluated and contribute to the final evaluation, which occurs at the end of it.

These evaluations that occur during the project cycle are referred to as monitoring.

**“No need to reinvent the wheel with every new project.  
Evaluation tells us what worked and what didn't.”**

An interim evaluation takes a snapshot at a point or milestone in the project cycle, such as year end, and can allow for project adjustments that improve outcomes.

## How to Evaluate?

There is no one way to do an evaluation.

While each evaluation is unique, a basic set of five questions can be asked:

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|-------------------|---|
| <b>What?</b>      | 1. Did we do what we said we would do?                                |
| <b>Why?</b>       | 2. What did we learn about what worked and what didn't work?          |
| <b>So What?</b>   | 3. What difference did it make that we did this work?                 |
| <b>Now What?</b>  | 4. What could we do differently?                                      |
| <b>Then What?</b> | 5. How do we plan to use evaluation findings for continuous learning? |

Each evaluation will have a mix of methods, tools and components.

Here are some to consider:

**Collecting Numbers (Quantitative Information)** – Facts and data that can be counted or “quantified” can be used to measure success. The number of posters printed for a public education campaign, for example, can be measured against the number you planned to print initially. If you planned to print 500 posters and achieved that number, then that element of the project can be viewed as a success.

Numeric data can be collected on outputs, achievements and products etc. Tools to measure quantitative information include numeric tracking of outputs, statistical analysis etc.

Establishing targets and “baselines” at the start of a project is important to quantitative measurement.

**Collecting Opinions (Qualitative Information)** – Less tangible aspects of a project such as its value, usefulness, effectiveness, meaning and perceived outcome can be evaluated by talking to people involved or affected by the project.

If the goals of a public education project are to change attitudes and beliefs around an issue, then success is often measured by discussing the results of the project with those targeted by it. Tools to gather qualitative information include: questionnaires, surveys, personal interviews and participatory group activities.

Developing a set of “indicators” that allow progress to be measured can be used to assess both quantitative and qualitative information as well as how well time frames were achieved.

**Confidentiality** – Confidentiality is an important part of any evaluation.

In order to gather honest responses from evaluation participants, an atmosphere of trust and confidence is essential. A commitment to confidentiality provides a guarantee that information is handled in a way that protects those who have provided it.

**“It is important that all evaluation participants understand that evaluation is NOT about finger-pointing. The goal of evaluation is to learn lessons.”**

**Inclusion of Stakeholders** – The inclusion of stakeholders in evaluation ensures that many benefit from the analysis and that “lessons learned” are shared widely to encourage positive change. A steering committee can help guide the evaluation and supervise the work of the evaluator.

### **Who Will Conduct the Evaluation?**

Evaluations can be conducted and interpreted by those doing the project to provide an inexpensive means to judge and improve projects, particularly on small projects. To ensure however, that information is gathered and analyzed rigorously and without bias by someone unaffected by the information, it may be necessary to hire an external evaluator. This is particularly true for large projects.

The hiring of a third-party contractor is one means to help ensure the evaluation is viewed as credible by those who will use the information, including funders. Some funders will require the use of an independent evaluator.

In the Yukon, a number of companies and consultants undertake evaluations. A list which includes these companies is included in this toolkit (Section 2).

Please note that inclusion in this list does not constitute an endorsement by Health Canada or the Council of Yukon First Nations.

### **Who Will Conduct the Evaluation?**

Informal evaluations can be done by project personnel as part of their work plan at little additional cost. Depending upon the size and scope of your project, the requirements of your funders and the variety of information collected, a third-party project evaluation may run between three and 10 per cent of the overall project budget.

**“A well done evaluation can help save money on future projects, policies and programs so it is money well spent!”**