



# **EVALUATION INTRODUCTION**

# INTRODUCTION

*“All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them.”*

- GALILEO GALILEI

Evaluation is the systematic acquisition and assessment of information gathered on specific questions to provide useful feedback for a program, organization, or individual.

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**E**valuation is the systematic acquisition and assessment of information gathered on specific questions to provide useful feedback for a program, organization, or individual. It is “a methodological area that is closely related to, but distinguishable from more traditional social research. It utilizes many of the same methodologies used in traditional social research, but because evaluation takes place within a political and organizational context, it requires group skills, management ability, political dexterity, sensitivity to multiple stakeholders and other skills that social research in general does not rely on as much.”

Evaluation is commonly thought to serve two purposes: learning and accountability. The two purposes are not separate; in fact, they overlap and reinforce each other significantly, since to be accountable implies the requirement to learn from success and failure.

Monitoring and evaluation are often confused with each other. They are related but distinct activities with a common overarching goal: to provide information that improves decisionmaking and facilitates learning. Evaluation generally offers a more in-depth analysis because it asks why something happened, whereas monitoring is more often simply providing basic data. More information on the distinctions between monitoring and evaluation can be found in the Monitoring chapter, page 81.

The evaluation portion of this manual is laid out in a three-stage process.

**Stage 1:** Evaluation Preparation

**Stage 2:** Evaluation Management

**Stage 3:** Evaluation Utilization

Evaluation preparation, stage one, reviews the decisions that need to be made regarding the evaluation during the project design. Knowing such things as why you are doing the evaluation, the evaluation audience, evaluation type, the evaluator’s role and qualifications, timing, and budget will enable the project team to plan wisely and maximize the benefit from the evaluation.

The decisions made in the evaluation preparation stage lay the groundwork for evaluation management, stage two. In stage two, the terms of reference and evaluation plan are described. These topics, as well as frequently asked questions on working with external evaluators and a discussion on strategies for common evaluation pitfalls, are all addressed in the Evaluation Management chapter.

Stage three discusses utilizing the evaluation at all levels of the project, the organization, and the wider conflict transformation field. While evaluation utilization may be labeled as the third stage, this does not truly reflect when the thinking on utilization actually begins. For example, how the findings and recommendations of the evaluation will be used is tied closely to why the evaluation is being conducted, which is a stage one decision. The chapter on evaluation utilizations page 178 covers how to ensure that evaluations foster learning and, consequently, how they generate practical new applications at all levels.

The following table provides a “quick and dirty” summary of key aspects of each of the stages.

In stage two, the terms of reference and evaluation plan are described.

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## Evaluation Stages Overview

Stage	Topic	Activities	Timing	Deliverables
<b>1</b>	Evaluation Preparation	<p>Make core decisions for the evaluation on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluation objectives</li> <li>• audience</li> <li>• evaluation type</li> <li>• role</li> <li>• approach</li> <li>• scope</li> <li>• evaluators</li> <li>• timing</li> <li>• budget</li> </ul>	During project design	Project design documents including key evaluation points
<b>2</b>	Evaluation Management	<p>Finalize core decisions</p> <p>Develop terms of reference</p> <p>Recruit evaluation team</p> <p>Create evaluation plan</p> <p>Implement evaluation</p>	Starts 4-6 months before evaluators are expected to collect data	<p>Evaluation section of donor proposal documents competently completed</p> <p>Terms of reference</p> <p>Evaluation deliverables (e.g., report, presentation)</p>
<b>3</b>	Evaluation Utilization	Reflect, apply, generalize, and share new knowledge identified by the evaluation within the organization and with the broader peacebuilding field	Many utilization decisions will occur in the evaluation preparation stage, while implementation will occur in the latter third of the evaluation cycle	<p>Utilization plan</p> <p>Possible outreach efforts:</p> <p>Academic journals</p> <p>Concise summaries for the public</p> <p>Lessons learned documents</p>