

Planning for Meaningful Evaluation



NOAA Coastal Services Center
LINKING PEOPLE, INFORMATION, AND TECHNOLOGY

Social Science Tools for Coastal Programs

Planning for Meaningful Evaluation

About This Publication

Some of the most challenging decisions in coastal management stem from the relationship between people and the environment. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coastal Services Center provides technical assistance to coastal management professionals addressing complex human-based problems.

Planning for Meaningful Evaluation is the eighth in a series of publications developed to bring information to this audience about the use of social science tools in their field of work. The document briefly describes a process for planning for an internally or externally conducted evaluation of a project or program, and the material is directly linked to a training course offered by the Center, Planning for Meaningful Evaluation (see www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/training/meaningful-evaluation). The training course provides additional contextual information and guidance to more fully explain the material and offers an opportunity for expert assistance in understanding the evaluation process. For information about additional training courses, social science tools, and technical assistance, please visit www.csc.noaa.gov.

About the NOAA Coastal Services Center

The Coastal Services Center, an office within the federal government's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), works with state and local programs devoted to the wise management of our nation's coastal resources. The Center provides these programs with tools, training, and expertise that might otherwise be unavailable. To learn more about the products and services available from this agency, visit www.csc.noaa.gov.

Table of Contents

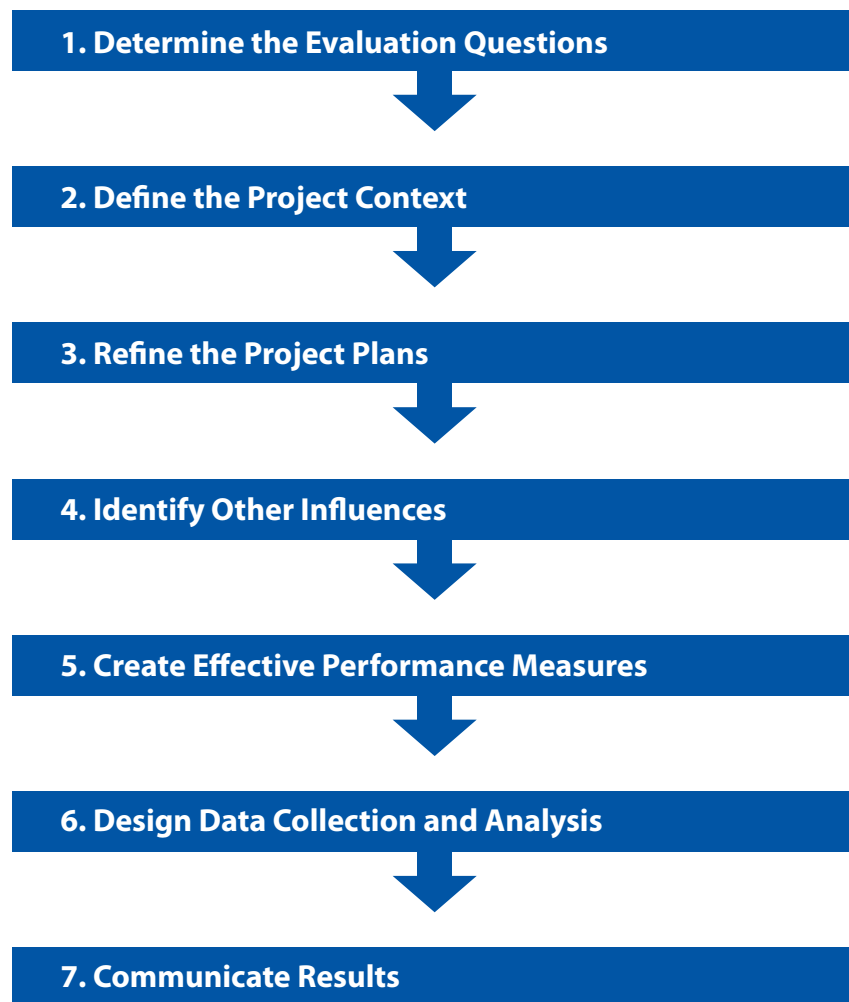
Introduction.....	1
Step 1: Determine the Evaluation Questions	2
Step 2: Define the Project Context.....	4
Step 3: Refine the Project Plans.....	5
Step 4: Identify Other Influences	6
Step 5: Create Effective Performance Measures.....	7
Step 6: Design Data Collection and Analysis.....	8
Step 7: Communicate Results.....	10
Conclusion	11
Glossary.....	13
Appendix A: Common Data Collection Methods for Evaluation	14
Appendix B: Rubric to Assess Readiness for an Evaluation.....	16

Introduction

Evaluation has many uses. Whether evaluating the needs of a group before designing a project, evaluating mid-project to assess progress and find areas for improvement, or evaluating at the end to measure success, evaluation provides critical data and direction that can greatly improve any effort.

Too often evaluation is an afterthought, cobbled together reactively, and is less effective than it could be. This document can change that dynamic, since these pages describe one of the most important components of a successful evaluation—adequate preparation.

This guidebook supports a training course offered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Services Center, Planning for Meaningful Evaluation. This training provides expert guidance, more detailed information, and practice in applying the concepts. The process taught in the course and showcased within these pages is outlined below and can be applied to a single *project* or to a *program*. The guidebook uses these terms interchangeably in its discussion of evaluation examples and concepts.



Step 1: Determine the Evaluation Questions

An evaluation should be driven by a specific question or set of questions rather than a vague notion that somebody would like to know “how the project went.” Evaluation questions, which are the foundation of all evaluation efforts, can focus on any stage of a project and generally fall into one of three categories as described in the table below.

Categories of Evaluation Questions

Category	Focus of Evaluation	Example Evaluation Questions
Process Evaluation	Analyzes the early development and implementation of a project by assessing whether strategies were implemented as planned, and whether expected outputs were produced	Did the project produce the expected number of brochures, host the expected number of events, or spend all grant funds appropriately?
Outcome Evaluation	Determines how well the desired outcomes and associated objectives for a project were met	Did the project increase understanding of an issue or produce a desired behavior change in the audience?
Impact Evaluation	Assesses longer-term changes in social, economic, and environmental conditions, as well as long-term maintenance of desired behaviors	Did the project improve on-the-ground conditions in a geographic area of interest, or did the audience maintain a specific behavior into the future?

Ideally, the evaluation questions are established by the project team early in the process, when goals, desired outcomes, and objectives are determined, but that's not how it always works out. Evaluation questions often surface during implementation, after the project is completed, or by someone outside of the project team. The following represent some of the people or groups who may pose evaluation questions:

Evaluation requestor – the person, group, or organization that requires the evaluation and is in a position to make decisions about the project—for example, funding organizations or government agencies

Evaluator – the trained evaluator who will conduct the evaluation—for example, a professional evaluation consultant or a government or university evaluation specialist

Evaluand – the subject of an evaluation, typically a group of people or a system rather than an individual

Project or program stakeholders – those who have been impacted by the work—for example, members of the target population for the project

Evaluation users – those who plan to use or learn from the evaluation of the work—for example, those who administer similar programs, or those in the research and evaluation fields

An easy way to articulate an evaluation question is to complete the following statement:

“I need to know _____ by _____ in order to decide _____.”

For example, the statement,

“I need to know *how well the coastal education program is increasing public knowledge on invasive species* by *the end of the quarter* in order to decide *whether additional project activities are needed*,”

would lead to an evaluation question such as,

“To what extent has the coastal education program increased public knowledge on invasive species?”

Asking the evaluation requestor to complete this statement as early as possible helps to clarify what information is being sought, establishes a deadline for the evaluation, and explains how the evaluation results will be used.

The evaluation should always focus on questions from those who will be making decisions affecting the project, especially the evaluation requestor. Also, priority should be given to questions that will generate information with these characteristics:

- Can be obtained, given the available time and financial and human resources
- Is important to a key decision-making group or multiple stakeholders
- Contributes to the goals of the program or project
- Is useful and not already available
- Would be of continuing interest or need, rather than a short-lived concern
- Can be translated into measurable terms

Step 2: Define the Project Context

Projects do not exist in political, social, or cultural vacuums. Many forces, both internal and external, shape how a project is conceived, designed, and implemented—and what effects it has. Providing the evaluator with this important contextual information can produce findings and recommendations that are more informed.

The level of contextual detail to provide depends largely on the evaluator's familiarity with the project. Evaluators familiar with the project may require less detail, while external evaluators, often less familiar with the work, may need a more detailed context.

The components of a document that provides this context most likely are readily available. Needs assessments, logic models, strategic plans, grant proposals and reports, and outreach materials typically contain a wealth of useful information. Media coverage, organizational newsletters, journals, municipal meeting minutes, and other resources are also helpful. Those providing this context should consider including the following components:

- **Existing conditions** surrounding the project and the issue being addressed
- **Drivers** or impetuses for the project being evaluated—for example mandates, needs assessment results, or documented problems
- **Activity specifics**, including a description of the activities and outputs being evaluated, their geographical scope, and important political, social, economic, and cultural realities
- **Target population** for the project, including what is known and assumed about the people, community, or system toward which the work is directed
- **Assumptions** or rationale explaining why the project is a good way to address the issue, including relevant biological, social science, or other research

Step 3: Refine the Project Plans

Preparing for an evaluation is a convenient time to revisit the original project plan, particularly the components related to the evaluation questions. Most project teams will articulate desired outcomes, but these outcomes may not be plausible, realistic, or logical. One reason for this is that the farther into the future the plan projects, the less predictable the outcomes become.

One way to combat this problem and start with a strong project plan is to rely on various planning tools and information.

Project plans usually have a better chance of success if a project planning tool such as a logic model, logical framework, or outcome chain is used. The NOAA Coastal Services Center suggests the use of the broadly applicable logic model tool when developing coastal management initiatives. Instruction on developing and refining a logic model is available through the Center's Project Design and Evaluation training (see www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/training/project-design), which provides the knowledge, skills, and tools to design and implement projects that have measurable impacts on a targeted population.

For projects with outcomes focused on human behavior, theories and models of behavior change can help project teams establish realistic outcomes and timelines. Referencing these theories in the project plan can also assure others—for example, evaluators—that the project plan is indeed logical and plausible.

Behavior change *theories* serve as guides to understanding behavior. Examples include social learning and social cognitive theory, theory of reasoned action, theory of planned behavior, and social marketing. Behavior change *models* are intended to guide behavioral interventions and include the environmental citizenship behavior model, stages of diffusion model, and diffusion of innovations model. Just as data models can help coastal managers predict how natural systems will respond to sea level rise, coastal erosion, and storm surge, behavior change models provide the basis for predictions about how people will change or behave after activities conducted through a project.

Step 4: Identify Other Influences

Other influences may affect efforts in either a positive or negative way. For example, an education project achieved a desired outcome of reducing litter at a local, heavily touristed beach, but the project was implemented in the midst of an economic recession. An evaluator would want to know whether fewer tourists visiting the beach might have contributed significantly to this outcome.

These other influences can be either internal or external. Internal influences are those factors over which the organization has control, such as ways an activity or product is advertised, the number of staff members assigned to a project or program, or the amount of funding resources made available. External influences, or those over which the organization has little or no control, can include weather events or natural disasters, changes to policies and laws, unexpected funding changes, and events that influence public perceptions. Whether internal or external, influences interfere with the cause-and-effect flow of events portrayed in the project plan and should be noted.

Inventorizing and considering influences during data collection can help the evaluator understand why certain outcomes did or did not happen. The following categories are offered to help project teams identify other influences, both internal and external:

- **Mandates** – rules, laws, codes, policies, and other instruments that guide program and project actions and human behaviors
- **Regulations** – the specific requirements of mandates affecting the target population
- **Alternatives** – other choices the target population has or could have available to it that would cause it to choose differently
- **Social and cultural** – the prevailing attitudes and beliefs of the target population regarding an effort or an organization; do other groups in the community have differing perceptions or values related to the effort or issue?
- **Environmental** – acts of nature or other conditions of the physical environment, which can affect target population participation, the development or implementation of the activity, or the application of new knowledge, skills, or attitudes
- **Economic** – changes in economic conditions, whether recession or growth, which can affect the availability of resources as well as the likelihood of target populations changing their attitudes or behaviors
- **Resources** – the availability of funding, equipment, services, or personnel and the effects on program or project implementation

Step 5: Create Effective Performance Measures

Also known as performance metrics or indicators, performance measures are objective, quantitative items measured during the course of a project and provide tangible evidence of progress. Measures can be focused on inputs, outputs, efficiency, service quality, or of course outcomes. Tying performance measurement data to the evaluation questions can provide a clear and concrete form of measurement.

Data collected through the natural sciences form the basis for important conclusions and require careful analysis and interpretation. Performance measurement data also require context and interpretation, since these measures show *what* is happening but not *why*. For this reason, performance measurement by itself does not constitute an evaluation; it is a tool that helps in the evaluation process.

For example—a spike in the level of a pollutant in a local waterway (i.e., *what* is happening) might indicate that the objective of meeting water quality standards won't be met on schedule, but investigation may show that spike was caused by other influences (i.e., *why* it is happening) and therefore isn't a failure of the project.

Perhaps the easiest way to establish performance measures is to refer to the time-honored SMART objectives planning method (Specific, Measurable, Audience- or issue-focused, Realistic yet ambitious, and Time-bound). SMART objectives describe important and measurable project components that can be monitored during the course of the effort. If the project is lacking objectives, the following questions can help identify them: what does the outcome look like? what exactly is happening? with whom is it happening? how often is it happening?

Performance measures should be helpful in both implementing and evaluating projects, not irrelevant—an exercise in bean counting. Also, collecting data on too many measures can become time-consuming and burdensome. The following criteria can help project teams prioritize metrics or establish new ones:

- **Direct** – is the measure a direct representation of the desired outcome? If it's not possible to directly measure an outcome, proxy or indirect measures must be used.
- **Specific** – is the measure stated with enough specificity and detail that an external evaluator or other outsider could collect the data and find the same results as the project team?
- **Useful** – does the measure provide data that help users better understand and improve the programs and projects?
- **Practical** – are the costs and time involved in collecting data for the measure reasonable in comparison to the usefulness of the data?
- **Culturally appropriate** – are the methods appropriate for the culture in which the effort is operating?
- **Adequate** – are enough data being collected to adequately understand the progress on a given outcome or objective?

Step 6: Design Data Collection and Analysis

Most evaluations require collection of new data on the population or the issue targeted by the project. Anecdotal data, or stories not collected systematically, can supplement evaluation results but should not be used as the sole source of evaluation data. Only data representative of the target population, collected in a systematic way, can truly illuminate the effectiveness of the work.

The methods and data determine what analyses are possible and what conclusions can be safely drawn from the evaluation, so a social scientist or evaluation professional can be helpful at this stage of planning. Choosing methods that are appropriate to both the target population's culture and the evaluation questions is critical. Appendix A discusses the purpose, advantages, and challenges of many of the most common data collection methods. Additionally, the NOAA Coastal Services Center offers several helpful and concise publications on various methods (see www.csc.noaa.gov/publications/#publications).

Because there is no single best data collection method or approach, multiple sources and types of information offer the greatest insight. The best evaluations typically use both qualitative and quantitative methods, or mixed methods, and they triangulate data. Triangulation incorporates data from multiple perspectives so that findings can be corroborated across data sets and biases reduced. For example, in an evaluation of an after-school education program, triangulation may involve collecting data from program teachers, the parents of participating children, and the participating children themselves.

Before collecting data, evaluators must ensure compliance with any applicable data collection regulations. Data collected from the public by, or on the behalf of, the federal government must comply with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. Data collected by a university or research facility will likely require approval from an institutional review board. Data collection by a nonprofit or company may call for review by a board of directors or other governing body.

Data Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are also important considerations. Reliability is the measure of whether the methods produce consistent results over repeated trials. A postal scale or other device that measures physical characteristics is a classic example of reliability because it provides consistent results from trial to trial. Tests of knowledge, opinion, and other psychological factors are generally less reliable. Low reliability obscures real differences, so the effort may appear less effective than it actually is if measured unreliably.

Common threats to reliability in an evaluation setting include the audience's reactions to different evaluators, differences in measuring situations, differences in the way methods are administered, and sudden changes in audience opinions. Many of these threats can be reduced by carefully documenting data collection protocols, using very clear and structured data collection instruments, training those who will be collecting the data, and comparing data from different data collectors to ensure that protocols are being followed.

Validity asks whether the methods measure what they're intended to measure. For example, if the desired outcome is public compliance with new hours of operation for a coastal park, measuring the number of trespassing citations issued at the site by law enforcement reflects only those instances where people have been *caught* breaking the new rules. Validity can be a subjective concept, and in many cases the validity of methods and associated data are determined by the evaluation requestor.

One way to strengthen the validity of the methods is to collect data on several different measures for an outcome of interest, which can help to safeguard against choosing a single measure that does not fully represent the outcome. In the above example, one might also consider collecting data on cases of vandalism in the park, along with local residents' reports of trespassers, to get a clearer picture of whether the outcome is materializing.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Depending on the methods chosen, data will end up in one of two categories: quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative data are expressed in terms of numbers and lend themselves to statistical analysis, whereas qualitative data are expressed in terms of language and contain more descriptive, narrative information that must be further analyzed.

Quantitative data include a vast array of numerical information such as responses to multiple choice questions, questions involving rating scales, and fill-in-the-blank questions requesting numeric answers. Quantitative data are commonly analyzed using basic descriptive statistics such as numerical counts of an item, percentages, measures of central tendency (i.e., mean, median, and mode), and measures of variability (i.e., range, standard deviation, and variance).

Qualitative data are generally more labor-intensive to collect but offer much more richly detailed information. Examples of this type of data are interview or focus group transcripts, open-ended survey responses or observations, or excerpts from various archives. Qualitative data are typically analyzed through a technique called content analysis. In content analysis, written communications are carefully and objectively analyzed for particular words, themes, concepts, or other items of interest. *Coding* the written communications in this way then allows the evaluator to make inferences and perform additional analyses.

Quantitative data are generally easier to collect and analyze than qualitative data but offer limited context and detail. While it can be tempting to focus on quantitative data, qualitative data should not be ignored because these data can offer great insight into why things are and how they came to be that way. A wealth of resources on both quantitative and qualitative methods in evaluation, as well as software for analyzing both types of data, are available.

Step 7: Communicate Results

Communicating the results of an evaluation is critical, particularly when decisions or judgments will be based on the information. An important first step is to know the needs and preferences of key users. Having an understanding of these users and how they prefer to receive information can inform the format, delivery, and level of detail and technicality of the report.

For external evaluations, one should never assume that the evaluator is familiar with the evaluation users. The reporting needs and preferences of these users, particularly the evaluation requestor, must be made clear. In evaluation reports, elements such as figures, infographics, images, quotations, testimonials, and case studies can illustrate and strengthen messages, and the following sections commonly appear:

- **Title page**
- **Table of contents**
- **Executive summary** – a results-focused and interest-catching summary of the evaluation in a single page
- **Program or project description** – all essential background on the work, including relevant context, design and plans, and other influences
- **Purpose of the evaluation** – a clear statement of the questions the evaluation seeks to answer, as well as any initial assumptions
- **Methods** – clear description of how the evaluation was conducted
- **Results** – key findings upon which conclusions and recommendations are based
- **Conclusions and recommendations** – interpretations of the evaluation findings, which may include recommendations

Conclusion

The most essential point to remember is that evaluation should not be an afterthought. Planning for an evaluation can eliminate many common evaluation challenges, lead to more useful results, and make the program or project itself better—better because the evaluation helps planning teams articulate their goals and identify areas for improvement. Evaluation can also be a great tool for communicating results and demonstrating success.

With these basic concepts in mind, the evaluation planning process can begin. An initial step, before contacting an internal or external evaluator, is to follow the rubric in Appendix B, which can help determine the readiness of a project or program for evaluation. If more preparation is needed, the NOAA Coastal Services Center’s Planning for Meaningful Evaluation training is available to provide more detailed information and practice—and ultimately a smooth start to evaluation planning.

References

McNamara, Carter. “Basic Guide to Program Evaluation (Including Outcomes Evaluation).” Website. Free Management Library resource adapted from the *Field Guide to Nonprofit Program Design, Marketing and Evaluation*, Minneapolis, MN, Authenticity Consulting LLC. Available at http://managementhelp.org/evaluatn/fnl_eval.htm.

Glossary

Content analysis – an analytical technique in which qualitative data are carefully and objectively analyzed for particular words, themes, concepts, or other items of interest

Evaluand – the subject of an evaluation, typically a group of people or a system rather than an individual

Evaluation questions – the set of questions that define what an evaluation will investigate

Evaluation requestor – the person, group, or organization that requests or requires the evaluation to occur—for example, funding organizations and government agencies

Evaluation users – those who plan to use or learn from the evaluation of the work—for example, those who administer similar projects or programs, and those in the research and evaluation fields

Evaluator – the trained evaluator who will conduct the evaluation—for example, a professional evaluation consultant or a government evaluation specialist

Formative evaluation – an evaluation conducted during the course of a project or program to assess effectiveness and identify potential improvements

Impact evaluation – an evaluation that assesses longer-term changes in social, economic, and environmental conditions, as well as long-term maintenance of desired behaviors

Needs assessment or front-end evaluation – an evaluation of the needs of a group to inform the design of a project or program

Outcome evaluation – an evaluation focused on determining how well the desired outcomes and associated objectives for a program or project were met

Performance measures/metrics/indicators – the objective, quantitative aspects of the work that are measured during the course of the project or program to determine *progress toward* achieving objectives and outcomes

Process evaluation – an evaluation focused on the development and implementation of a program or project, assessing whether strategies were implemented as planned and whether expected outputs were produced

Program – a collection of projects directed toward a common goal

Qualitative data – data that are expressed in terms of language and contain more descriptive, narrative information that must be further analyzed

Quantitative data – data that are expressed in terms of numbers and lend themselves to statistical analysis

Reliability (in data collection) – the extent to which the methods produce consistent results over repeated trials

Stakeholders – those who have been impacted by a project or program—for example, members of the target audience the project is trying to influence

Summative evaluation – an evaluation conducted at the end of a project or program to answer key questions about its overall effectiveness—for example, whether objectives were met

Target population – the individual, community, system, or other unit to which a project or program is directed

Triangulation (in data collection) – an approach to data collection that incorporates data from multiple perspectives so that findings can be corroborated across data sets and biases reduced

Validity (in data collection) – the extent to which chosen methods measure what they're intended to measure

Appendix A: Common Data Collection Methods for Evaluation

The following table summarizes the purpose, advantages, and challenges of some of the most commonly used data collection methods for evaluation.

Method	Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
Interview	To fully understand someone's impressions or experiences, or learn more about their answers to questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can get full range and depth of information • can develop relationship with client • can be flexible with client 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can take much time • can be hard to analyze and compare • can be costly • interviewer can bias client's responses
Focus Group	To explore a topic in depth through group discussion—examples are to gather reactions to an experience or suggestion, understanding common complaints, and so forth; useful in evaluation and marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can quickly and reliably get common impressions • can be efficient way to get much range and depth of information in short time • can convey key information about programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be hard to analyze responses • need good facilitator for safety and closure • difficult to schedule meeting time for six to eight people
Questionnaire, Survey, and Checklist	To quickly or easily get lots of information from people in a nonthreatening way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be completed anonymously • inexpensive to administer • easy to compare and analyze • can administer to many people • can get lots of data • many sample questionnaires already exist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • might not get careful feedback • wording can bias client's responses • impersonal • in surveys, may need sampling and statistical expertise • doesn't get full story
Observation	To gather accurate information about how a program actually operates, particularly about processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can view operations of a program as they are actually occurring • can adapt to events as they occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be difficult to interpret behaviors • observations can be difficult to categorize • can influence participants' behaviors • can be expensive

Method	Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
Existing Data	To gather information on the audience or the issue; to identify what previous investigators have found about the state of the knowledge, skills, behaviors, or attitudes of the intended audience with relation to the issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can provide much information in relatively little time • has most likely been reviewed or seen by audience • makes use of already gathered information • helps to chart changes over time • provides evidence about the problem • involves minimum effort or interruption of audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be out of date (e.g., technology needs) • data synthesis can be difficult • may not address specific questions of concern • not flexible means to get data; data restricted to what already exists • statistical data may not address perceptions of the problem, or may not address causes • reports may be incomplete
Test	To determine the audience's current state of knowledge or skill regarding the issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps identify a problem or a deficiency in knowledge or skills • results are easily quantified • individual performances can be easily compared • easily seen as job-related • helps determine if the problem is a training issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited availability of validated tests for specific situations • results can be influenced by attitudes • language or vocabulary can be an issue • people may be concerned about how results will be used • adults may resent taking tests
Concept Map	To gather information about someone's understanding of and attitudes toward a complex subject or topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offers a more comprehensive and complex view of someone's thinking than a test does • could be a better tool for visual learners or test-phobic people • can gather qualitative and quantitative data • useful for adults and children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • takes training to complete properly • takes training to administer • can be challenging and time-consuming to score • can be difficult to analyze and interpret
Rubric	To assess how well someone is able to perform a task or behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focuses an observer's observations • makes a hard-to-quantify performance quantifiable • useful to assess what people do rather than just what they know • good for collecting time-series data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development can be time-consuming because it requires the identification of all key elements of a performance • not flexible; could miss key elements if not listed on the rubric • high degree of subjectivity

(adapted from C. McNamara, http://managementhelp.org/evaluatn/fnl_eval.htm)

Appendix B: Rubric to Assess Readiness for an Evaluation

This rubric can be used to assess a program or project’s readiness for an evaluation. The cumulative score will indicate the overall level of readiness. The individual ratings will indicate areas where preparation is nearly complete or further attention is needed. If the score is in the lower or even middle range, the NOAA Coastal Services Center’s Planning for Meaningful Evaluation training can provide more detailed information and practice with the steps outlined in this guide.

Evaluation Plan Rubric			Rating
1. Evaluation Questions	Identification of requestor	1 – Needs improvement 2 – Identified many, not just requestor/decision maker(s) 3 – Identified only those who <i>need</i> the evaluation to make a decision affecting the program	
	Identification of what requestor needs to know	1 – Needs improvement 2 – Needs articulated, but lengthy and imprecise 3 – Succinct articulation of <i>their</i> need and for what type of decision	
	Prioritization of evaluation questions	1 – Needs improvement 2 – Too many priority questions 3 – One or few, clearly prioritized	
2. Context	Adequacy	Refer to the bulleted items in Step 2 of this document, write the number of items that have been adequately addressed (0-5)	
3. Project or Program Plans (e.g., logic model)	Identification of plan components that link to the evaluation questions	Connection between evaluation questions and relevant part of plan is 1 – Loose 2 – Sound 3 – Strong	
	Definition and logical connection	Each string of items supporting the evaluation questions is 1 – Poorly defined with causal gaps 2 – Some weak definitions and weak causal connections between items 3 – Well defined with strong cause-and-effect relationships between items	
	Realism and completeness of timelines	Time estimates are 1 – None or one of the following: complete, realistic, well-founded 2 – Two of the following: complete, realistic, well-founded 3 – Complete, realistic, and well-founded	
	Credibility of assumptions	1 – Flawed or outdated assumptions 2 – Credible, well-founded assumptions 3 – Well-founded assumptions are articulated and supported with evidence-based approaches	

Evaluation Plan Rubric			Rating
4. Other Influences	Sufficiency	1 – Insufficient accounting of internal or external influences 2 – Sufficient accounting of internal or external 3 – Sufficient accounting of internal and external	
	Supportive of evaluation questions	Link to evaluation questions 1 – needs improvement: some or many performance measures are irrelevant 2 – adequate: supportive of evaluation questions but could be improved 3 – strong: handful of directly supportive performance measures	
5. Performance Measures	Data source definition	How clearly defined are sources of performance measurement data? 1 – Needs improvement 2 – Adequately defined 3 – Clearly defined	
	Instruments	1 – Uses one source of data 2 – Uses two sources of data 3 – Uses triangulation to gather data	
6. Data Collection and Analysis		Given the type of evaluation questions, the instrument choices are 1 – Fair to poor 2 – Mix of good and fair or poor 3 – All are rated good given the type of questions	
	Methods	1 – Uniform: measures either all quantitative or all qualitative 3 – Mixed: makes use of both qualitative and quantitative measures	
7. Communicate Results	Knowledge of requestor needs, and report format and outline	1 – No knowledge of evaluation requestor needs or preferences 2 – Knowledge of evaluation requestor needs and preferences but no plan for format 3 – Well developed outline and format based on needs of evaluation requestor	
Evaluation Plan Readiness	Cumulative Score (14-47)		

Score:

- 47-36 – Share and confirm with evaluation requestors and start evaluating!
- 35-24 – Off to a good start, but there is still some work to do.
- < 23 – More preparation is needed before committing resources to an evaluation.



NOAA Coastal Services Center
LINKING PEOPLE, INFORMATION, AND TECHNOLOGY

2234 South Hobson Avenue
Charleston, SC 29405-2413
www.csc.noaa.gov

2012