Writing Requests for Proposals for an Evaluation and Working with Evaluation Consultants

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Northwest Territories

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INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to help people who are planning to write terms of reference for evaluation contracts and who then have to rate the responses that they receive. Many thanks go to the Advocacy Committee of the Canadian Evaluation Society who have made a major contribution to the drafting of this document.

Thousands of dollars are spent each year through Requests For Proposals (RFP) by the government and not-for-profit groups. It can be intimidating to be responsible for a large evaluation contract, and one must have the best information available before entering into any agreements. Evaluation is a specialized field and most people who buy evaluation services are professional administrators and managers rather than professional evaluators. If you follow this outline you may be able to clarify the terms of reference so that you get the best proposals. Hopefully you will be able ask the right questions to make wise decisions when it comes to making your choice. It is in everyone's best interest for managers to become better consumers for the services that they buy from external sources.

From the very start of a project, evaluation steering committees and consultants can get bogged down when the Terms of Reference (ToR) are unclear and vague. If the committee is not sure, then the evaluator or proponent will have a difficult time in writing a suitable proposal.

Before you start writing your terms of reference

Before you write terms of reference for an evaluation project or contact, you must determine if hiring an evaluation consultant is the way that you wish to proceed.

There may be times when it is preferable to do an in-house evaluation using your skills and/or those of other in-house or GNWT staff. You may choose to do this for financial reasons, to build evaluation skills into your organization, because of client/subject matter confidentiality or timing. Be prepared however, for the legitimate claim that a favorable bias toward your program and staff may be reflected in your findings.

There are times when it is entirely appropriate to hire an evaluator, to give the task over to another person who is credible and independent:

- ❒ you or other staff don't have the time to do the evaluation;
- ❒ you don't have all the skills or expertise to do it; and/or
- ❒ you must remain arms length from the evaluation so that findings are seen as credible and not under your influence
- ❒ you need a fresh or impartial look at the program

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Here are some of the factors to consider when deciding whether to hire an external evaluation consultant:

Pros	Cons
Less work for you	You give up some control over the process
Consultants have the relevant skills and experience	You may not learn useful skills
Consultants bring an impartial point of view	It may be expensive - you need to find the funds
Results might be seen as more objective to other members of the community	Consultant may not completely understand the program
It may be easier for staff or clients to confide in a neutral third party than the boss	Staff may feel threatened and resist the exchange of information

Please note that although hiring an external consultant may lessen the work involved for you and your staff, managing an evaluation contract is demanding and time-consuming.

At the beginning of the project a number of issues need to be settled and documented. If this is done, the Terms of Reference will come together in a more precise and clear manner. For this piece of work you need to decide who will be on your steering committee or if you will be working alone. If you are working with a committee, you will need to have a meeting with them to answer the following questions:

1. *What is the purpose of the evaluation?*

You need to clearly define what the purpose of the evaluation is. Why are you doing this? Is it a requirement for funding? Are you seeking feedback for continuous program improvement?

2. *What is the scope of the evaluation?*

How big is this evaluation? Is it the yearly annual check-up? Is it addressing a simple question or is it a major study? You must give an idea of the scope of the project so that the evaluator can envision the scale to which the proposal needs to be written.

3. *Who is the audience and client of the evaluation?*

No, it is not usually the program's participants. The Board and managers may share the results with the program participants, but the document is being written for an evaluation client; the Deputy Minister, the Program Manager, or the Chair of the Board etc. (It could be argued that empowerment evaluation is an approach where the participants "own" the evaluation, but still, someone has to guide the process.) Who is paying the bill?

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

4. What is the chain of command?

Everyone involved in the evaluation needs to know who the point of contact for the evaluator will be and what the chain of command is. In other words the roles and responsibilities should be clear. In the contract that you draw up for the project it is helpful to re-state this information; the point of contact, to whom the reports will go, who does the debriefing and updates the Board, who writes the draft reports, who talks to the media etc.

5. What is it, exactly, that you want to know?

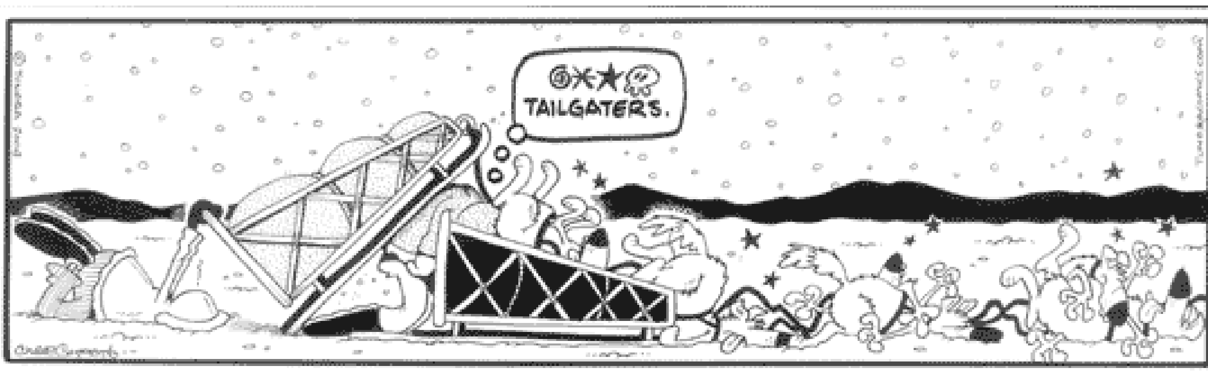
Look at the documentation of the program to see why it was set up in the first place. What was the program expected to accomplish? This is critical. You need to come to agreement with your team so that everybody has the same understanding as to what will be the evaluation focus. Things to think about might include:

- How well is the program meeting the clients' needs?
  - Is it meeting needs?
  - Are there some needs that are not being met?
  - Are you meeting the needs that the program was designed for?

- How can the program be improved?
  - Is your implementation going the way you planned it?
  - Are your operations running smoothly?
  - Is there a problem in the way things are processed?

- Are your program goals being met?
  - What outcomes can be documented?

You must be clear on what you are asking the evaluator to test. Is it a process? An outcome? Implementation? Client needs? As you know, there are many stages to a programs life. Each stage will have it's challenges and successes, so you might want to consider the stage of the program before you decided on your questions. The figure on the following pages shows that there are different forms of

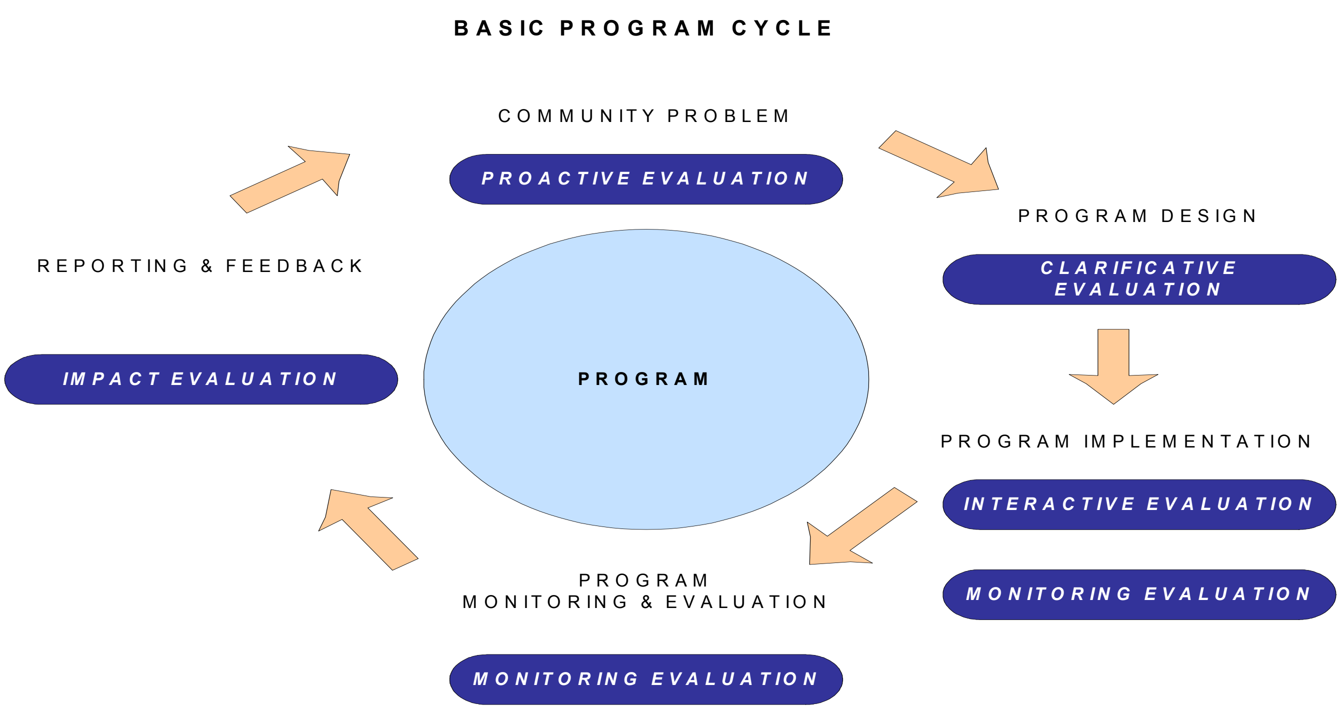


LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Summary of Forms and Approaches

Form of Evaluation	Proactive	Clarificative	Interactive	Monitoring	Impact
Approaches	Needs-Assessment Research Review Best Practice Review Benchmarking	Evaluability - Assessment Logic/Program Theory Accreditation Formative	Responsive Action Research Quality Review Empowerment Participatory Process	Component - Analysis Performance-Assessment Performance - Measures Systems Analysis	Objectives Based Goal Free Outcomes Studies Performance Audit Summative
Orientation	Synthesis	Clarification	Improvement	Justification/fine tuning	Justification Accountability

Knowing where the program is in it's lifecycle, and knowing the kinds of information that you want from the evaluation will help you to focus in on the right approach. As every program is in a different stage in its lifecycle, your evaluation will have program specific needs. Use the following diagram to help decide what your evaluation needs are.



For additional information please refer to Program Evaluation: Forms and Approaches, John Owen & Patricia Rogers, Sage Publications, 1999

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

6. Have you talked to your staff?

Remember to reassure your staff before hiring a consultant. The consultant will be evaluating the program, not the program staff and their co-operation is essential. Look at this evaluation as your chance to learn more about your program. It can provide you with information that you can use to celebrate your success and learn where change is desirable. You can reassemble parts of the program that need it, and build on what is working well. Some staff may see it as a threat when in fact it could be a great opportunity to make changes!

Finally, once all of the above details are sorted out, you should prepare an information package on the program that you can give to your prospective bidders. This will ensure a competitive process and will save you a lot of time so that you do not have to explain every detail over and over again. This package should contain the history of the program, the clients, when it was set up, and the program design. You may also want to include information about possible data sources. Remember that you have an obligation to protect your client's confidentiality here. An individual's case files are usually off limits.

DEVELOPING YOUR TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)

The Terms of Reference must include nearly everything that the evaluation consultants (proponents) need to know to prepare their proposals and develop their approach to the evaluation. Your information package (given to the consultants upon request) will contain the details. If the documents are done well, evaluation consultants can accurately interpret what you're looking for. In responding, proponents may suggest different approaches to the evaluation but they all should start with the same understanding of what you're looking for and why. A good request for proposals may contain the following items.

Request for Proposals (RFP)

1. Background
2. Purpose of the evaluation
3. Scope
4. Audience and client of the evaluation
5. Roles and responsibilities
6. Evaluation questions
7. Code of Conduct
8. Deliverables
9. Budget
10. Timelines
11. Submission procedures
12. Summary

Terms of Reference (ToR)

1. Purpose of the evaluation
2. Evaluation questions
3. Program overview
4. Scope
5. Timelines
6. Budget
7. Project management
8. Deliverables
9. Provisions of the contract
10. Proposal format requirements
11. Submission procedures and deadlines
12. How proposals will be rated
13. Who to contact for more information

DEVELOPING A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

BACKGROUND

Two things should be covered in this section, the background of the project, and of the evaluation. The program, organization and environment that it is housed in should be described briefly. A paragraph on the activities are helpful too. Include enough information so that the consultant's interest can be peaked. The background to the evaluation should include why the evaluation is being done, if it is being done as a part of a contribution agreement, and other relevant details.

PURPOSE

Please refer to page 2, question 1 for things to consider when defining the purpose of your evaluation.

AUDIENCE & CLIENT OF THE EVALUATION

Please refer to page 2, question 3 for more information on the client and audience of an evaluation.

SCOPE

Please refer to page 2, question 2 for more information in the scope of an evaluation.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Please refer to page 3, question 5 for things to consider when developing your evaluation questions.

CODE OF CONDUCT

So far, although there are no legal requirements to follow an evaluation code of conduct, you can state that you expect your proponents to follow the Canadian Evaluation Societies Code of Conduct for Program Evaluation. These are available on the CES website at www.evaluationcanada.ca. This is a safety measure, helping to make sure that whomever you hire will act in a professional manner. As you are the person doing the hiring you have the right to ask for this.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

It will help you later on in your evaluation project if you clarify what the consultant and project director's roles and responsibilities are. Please refer to Appendix 3 for suggested roles and responsibilities.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

What do you expect the proponent to give you? Just a report will probably not suffice. Think about asking for;

- One or two meetings before the evaluation is implemented
- Regular status reports
- A draft report prior to final publication,
- A presentation on the draft findings
- Final documentation and/or raw data

Please note that asking the consultant to rewrite their final report over and over is not fair. You must be clear up front what you want. The consultant bases his or her price on drafting and correcting a document only so many times.

DEVELOPING A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

BUDGET

You will be seeking the maximum value for your budget. It is more important to get a good product for the evaluation money that you have set aside rather than saving a few dollars on the product. Buying an evaluation is not like buying office furniture, where the specifications are known in advance. Part of what you are investing in is the specification of the evaluation.

For program managers working in the social area (i.e. Non-Capital projects) there is a dilemma of what to do about the budget. Many people hesitate to state the budget in the hopes that they can get the project done for less than what they have put aside. Many people ask if the budget or a budget range should be advertised. They worry that proponents will work their proposal up to the amount advertised in the RFP.

Yes, this may happen, but look at it from a time point of view. The scope of the evaluation and the depth of research will be impacted by how much you wish to spend. If you don't give a dollar value the proponent will waste a lot of time designing the super deluxe methodology and time, when all you wanted was a standard evaluation. Time is money to a consultant – don't waste it. By giving them the dollar amount they will tell you how far they can go within this range. Don't forget to mention if you are GST exempt.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

You must be very clear on how the proposals are to be submitted. This includes the deadline for submission (time and date), the location and the person to whom the proposals must be delivered. You need to make sure that the proposal reaches the right party at the right time. You will need to give some thought as to how much time you will allow proponents to prepare their submissions.

TIMELINES

Give the timelines as estimates. You must remember to work backward from when the project is to be finished to when the project is about to start. The best idea is to include a couple weeks of flextime, depending on the size and scope of the evaluation and the potential to get delayed somewhere along the line.

POSTING A REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Where you post your RFP is important. Hidden in the back of a trade magazine may not be effective. Posting to a large newspaper or a national publication can work well for you, but it may be expensive. Posting to subject-relevant websites and newsletters is a good idea. The more exposure that your RFP receives, the more choice that you will have in selecting a proponent.

Also remember to review your company policy on handling an RFP (if one exists). There are limits to what you can tell a vendor. Telling one person everything and another person the bare minimum sets up an unfair advantage. In the Government of the Northwest Territories questions are answered all at once and every vendor gets a copy of the questions and your reply.

FINDING AND CHOOSING A CONSULTANT

GETTING GOOD CONSULTANTS INTERESTED IN DOING THE JOB

When hiring permanent staff, you usually will do what you can to encourage the best people to apply for your vacancies. The same applies to hiring consultants – you want to get consultants interested in doing your job. Good consultants do not respond to every request for proposal or to every job offer. Therefore, you want to make everything about your job as inviting as possible, to encourage the best to consider working for you, for example through such means as:

- A friendly and inviting *tone* which makes the project sound exciting (i.e. not an RFP which sounds adversarial and dull);
- Being *clear* about what you want the study to do and honest about what you are not sure about;
- Flexibility (e.g. don't make the availability for a meeting at 9:00 a.m. the day after tomorrow a prerequisite);
- Providing sufficient time for preparation of a proposal;
- Providing enough information and being open to questions, so that a prospective consultant is in a position to develop an informed proposal which addresses your needs;
- Being realistic in your requirements and expectations (e.g. use a selection procedure in keeping with the size of the job, and don't demand information in proposals which you won't need);
- Setting a realistic budget for what you require (if you are realistic in what you ask, good consultants will attempt to add value; if you ask for the moon "to see how much of it we can get" you will be disappointed.) Some jurisdictions are prohibited from including a budget in an RFP.
- Establishing a good track record for how you treat bidders and consultants (consultants will check your "references" too to determine what kind of a client you are).

REVIEWING PROPOSALS

A proposal outline may include:
- Cover letter
- Executive summary
- Description of the project team
- Relevant experience
- Division of labor among team members
- Proposed methodology, study design, or evaluation framework
- Detailed work plan (including a statement on ethics or confidentiality if applicable)
- Budget with breakdown of fees/expenses
- Appendices
- Resumes of team members
- Insurance certificates or code of ethics
- References

REVIEWING & RATING PROPOSALS

CHECKLIST
Have You…

- ❐ Reviewed hiring and advertising restrictions and requirements in your organization?
- ❐ Checked for special requirements you may need in a consultant?
- ❐ Decided how you will advertise, such as general call for proposals, invitations to specific consultants, or sole source?
- ❐ Prepared a plan for rating proposals?
- ❐ Decided who will respond to questions from proponents, and in what manner?
- ❐ Thought about a "pre-proposal" phase, for consultant to gather information?
- ❐ Reviewed proposals against your decision model?
- ❐ Interviewed your short list of successful proponents, if applicable?
- ❐ Done a reference check of proponents?
- ❐ Advised everyone involved as to who the successful proponent was?

RATING PROPOSALS

Outline how and when you plan to select the successful proposal from amongst those submitted. Give an overview of the decision making process you will be following, and when a decision will be made. A table showing the relative weighting of each of the factors you will use to rate proposals is helpful.

REVIEWING & RATING PROPOSALS

SAMPLE EVALUATION PROPOSAL RATING CRITERIA

WEIGHT	BASIC ELEMENTS	SCORE
25	Project Team and Past Relevant Experience	
30	Design, Methods and Approach.	
10	Project Schedule	
20	Budget	
15	References	

Note: This is a sample only. The basic elements and their weight can be adjusted according to your needs. Check your financial management rules as your jurisdiction or agency may have rules and regulations. Don't forget the Business Incentive Policy (BIP) adjustment.

If the organization issuing the RFP does not feel qualified to assess some aspects of the proposal, it is sometimes a good idea to invite an impartial outsider or partner to participate in the review process.

Project Team

The names, qualifications, specialized knowledge or credentials of the people assigned to this project. (Basic foundational skills and knowledge of theory)

- Is there a good understanding of program evaluation *in general* held by the team?
- Do they have proven expertise in the field?
- Are there other special requirements needed for this project?
- Whose time are you buying? The research assistant or the field expert?

Multi-disciplinary teams can include combinations of the following:

- Evaluation Specialists
- Public sector management experience.
- Great facilitators and communicators
- Social Science research experts.
- Statisticians
- Subject-matter practitioners

REVIEWING & RATING PROPOSALS

Past Experience

Have the proponents conducted similar evaluations in the past? (Direct, practical experience in the area).

Have they had experience working in northern communities or regions?
Do they have experience in evaluating the same or similar topics?
Have they worked with populations similar to yours?
What kind of transferable skills have they demonstrated elsewhere?
Does their company (or organization) have a proven track record in this subject matter? Will the team members be able to draw upon the company's resources in this area?

Look for
Involvement with similar programming.
Demonstrated success conducting evaluation projects.
Experience conducting research with or around your target group
Excellent writing skills

Design, Methods and Approach

You will want to assess how well the proponents' approach matches your requirements, resources, and desired outcomes for the project. If you need to, get help in assessing the methodology.
Their approach(es) must be complete and comprehensive. They should not skim over the technical parts .Look closely at the work style. Are they presenting themselves as experts, to be left alone to do the work, or as facilitators, to work closely with program staff and stakeholders? Is there an appropriate selection of information to be compiled? Are consultation procedures practical and appropriate?
Is it clear how much time the consultants will spend on-site in your community? Is there familiarity with relevant literature and information sources?

Some questions that you may need to ask:

- ❐ Is the proposed method appropriate for your audience?
- ❐ Has consideration been given to language or cultural barriers?
- ❐ What is their interest in taking on a project such as yours?
- ❐ How will they validate their findings?
- ❐ How will they identify stakeholders?
- ❐ What kind of communication techniques do they propose? Are there regular opportunities for you to provide feedback on the process?
- ❐ Are they prepared to incorporate feedback into reports, to complete any necessary ethics forms within your organization?
- ❐ Are they able to travel? Is this included in their budget?

REVIEWING & RATING PROPOSALS

Design, Methods and Approach cont'd

Instrument Screening

It is a good idea to require approval of any instruments that go out to the public or to your partners or clients. Your consultant is not an expert in your speciality, and as such will need your guidance in using the proper language and explanations. It also will serve to make sure that the questions that you want answered are covered off and the consultant is on track.

Project Schedule and Feasibility of Workplan

You will want to check that the time lines proposed seem reasonable for the work outlined, and also that they are compatible with your work schedule and project requirements.

Look for

- Is the proposed approach timely and feasible?
- Have they included time in which to test their instruments?
- Have they included time for consultation and adjustments?
- Is there any "flex" time in the work plan?
- Assess yourself – have you reasonable expectations of what can be done in this time frame?

Budget

Are the costs outlined reasonable for the product to be delivered? Make sure costs are broken down between fees and expenses, and that there is efficient use of resources. The evaluation should be efficient and produce information of sufficient value so that the resources expended can be justified.

Look For

- Fees and Expenses
- Cost effectiveness
- Breakdown of the time of the principals and research assistants
- Accurate breakdown of travel costs

References

Make sure the references provide positive assessments of these consultants and their work.

Ask the reference checks:

- If communication skills were effective
- If projects were completed on a timely basis
- Were products delivered within deadline.
- Were products useful, relevant and clear.
- Was there demonstrated ability to work effectively with a variety of stakeholders.
- Were they pleased with the quality of the work
- Would they hire them again?

REVIEWING & RATING PROPOSALS

Other Considerations

You may want to look at other things, such as the proponents having sufficient insurance if necessary for your project, or have an overall assessment category for the quality of the proposal itself. A clean, concise, well-organized and well-written proposal is a good indication of the quality of product a consultant will tend to generate. The following are adapted from the earlier referenced article from Burt Perrin:

How well does the consultant appear to understand the purpose and context of your study and what types of information and manner of presentation is likely to be most useful to you?

To what extent has the consultant demonstrated active listening? Not just hearing the words being spoken or written, but the thoughts and emotions behind these; an interest and ability to ask probing questions (e.g. of you regarding your objectives for the project) and to effectively respond to the answers.

Does the consultant propose approaches and ideas different from exactly what was mentioned in the terms of reference? Different ideas, provided they are consistent with your intended use of the study, can add value. They also are an indication that the consultant has thought about your project and has demonstrated the creativity to do more than parrot back to you your exact words from the terms of reference.

Try not to be overly impressed with fancy looking proposals and presentations. Glossy presentations and standardized research models may appear impressive, but they can make it hard to see if the consultant really understands your needs and is in a position to respond to them.

Have you taken into account who, specifically on the consulting team will actually carry out the work? Frequently, especially with larger firms, the person responsible for drafting the proposal and for making the presentation will have little or no involvement in carrying out the job once it has been landed.

Most importantly, does everything you know about the consultant, based upon the proposal as well as all other relevant information, give you confidence that the study is likely to result in output which will be useful to you and that your organization will be able to use?

THE FINAL DECISION

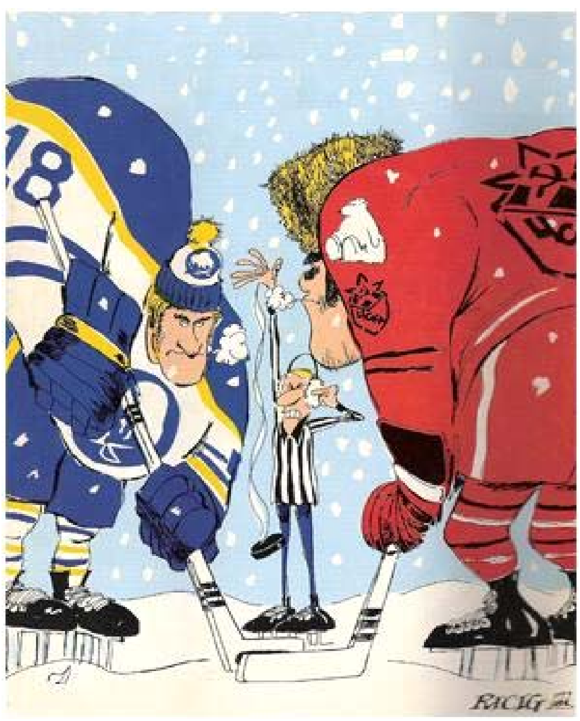
If the two best proposals are very close in your ratings, you may wish to get more information from them before you choose one. Interviewing both proponents either face-to-face or by phone might be a good option for this. This lets you meet them, get a better feel of who they are and how they work and to ask for any clarifications you might want on their proposals.

This is a good time to point out any areas where a proponent's plans are not consistent with the requirements of the terms of reference. Such inconsistencies may be simply based upon a misinterpretation of what your terms of reference called for and can easily be worked out.

Once you select a proposal, let all the other proponents know your decision as soon as possible by telephone or by a letter. They may ask for feedback. Providing comments about what you saw as areas for improvement in their proposal can be helpful to them. A debriefing allows the unsuccessful proponents the chance to further explore where their proposals fell short, in order for them to do a better job in the future.

At times, you may find that you need more information than is provided here. If that happens, look for help. There may be others in your organization that can help you. Your local chapter of the Canadian Evaluation Society may be able to point you to people or reference material that will assist you: www.evaluationcanada.ca

The work does not end with selecting a proposal, the action phase of the evaluation is next. As you get underway, remember that everyone involved has a stake in the evaluation going well and leading to the best possible evaluation results.



PLANNING YOUR EVALUATION PROJECT

CHECKLIST
Have You…..

- ❐ Reviewed your resources and needs to determine if you want to hire a consultant?
- ❐ Decided who the project manager) will be?
- ❐ Discussed the project with the program staff and stakeholders?
- ❐ Established a steering committee if desired?
- ❐ Developed a detailed Terms of Reference?
- ❐ Carefully defined the specific purpose of the evaluation and what you wish to accomplish?
- ❐ Included as much information as possible for the proponents?
- ❐ Reviewed any standard requirements in you organization's proposal selection process?
- ❐ Prepared a program overview?
- ❐ Reviewed data and information sources available fore the consultant?
- ❐ Listed technological/document-formatting requirements?
- ❐ Prepared a detailed work plan and budget?
- ❐ Though about and outlined the required deliverables, with any special formatting requirements or presentation techniques for different audiences?
- ❐ Outlined contract provisions, proposal format requirements, rating system?
- ❐ Identified contact people to provide consistent information as necessary (perhaps the project manager?)

CONTRACT CLAUSES TO BE AWARE OF

Signing the Contract

Now you're ready to sign the formal contract with the evaluation consultant or evaluation team. Its terms shouldn't be a surprise to anyone as a sample should have been attached as an appendix to the Terms of Reference and discussed at your initial meeting. Any changes agreed to in the initial meeting should be reflected in the contract and revised Terms of Reference. The successful proposal should be referred to and attached. The contract needs to clarify which document prevails, should there be any disagreement between terms of the contract

If it is necessary for the evaluation consultant to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of program clients, make sure that this is specified in the contract. Particularly where the final evaluation report will be made public, you want to make sure that program data will be reported in a way that doesn't compromise this. In dealing with programs operating in small communities, protecting client privacy may be particularly challenging.

Remember that the contract should be signed before any work begins.

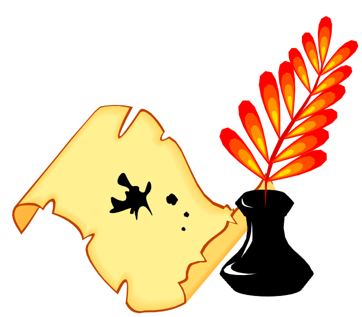
All most all departments of the GNWT use the Public Works and Services Act template which is available on their website. The Department of Health and Social Services may have a template that is slightly different. There are few clauses in the contract that may be unexpected. Both parties should be aware of the following and discuss them before the contract is signed. Here are a few examples:

Who Owns the Data?

- *(5.7) Title to any report, drawing, photograph, plan, specification, model, prototype, pattern, sample, design, logo, technical information, invention, method or process and all other property, work or materials which are produced by the Contractor in performing the contract or conceived, developed or first actually reduced to practice in performing the contract (herein called "the property ") shall vest in the GNWT and the Contractor hereby absolutely assigns to the GNWT the copyright in the property for the whole of the term of the copyright.*

If you have commissioned the evaluation, arranged for participation from the staff or client body, or shared operational files with the evaluator, your program owns the data. That means that things like presentations, reports, and briefings have been bought and paid for by your unit, and belong to your unit.

However!



To the GNWT Staff: If you promise the participants that their comments are to be held in confidence and that they are anonymous, then the evaluator, if he or she cannot erase the indicators of who the respondent is, (and most likely they cannot) they are acting ethically when they destroy these pieces of raw data after the analysis.

CONTRACT CLAUSES TO BE AWARE OF

You made a promise to the participants and the hired the evaluator to work under this condition. Do not expect that they will go back on their word. To the Evaluator: Before the evaluation design and sample has been decided upon, you must keep you eyes out for any potential conflict with the contractor over sensitive material, and bring it to their attention. Point out to the contractor what it means when anonymity or confidentiality is promised. Come to an agreement with them that anonymous data will be destroyed after analysis, or statements made in confidence may be relayed but the respondent will not be revealed. Get it writing as the basic contract template of the GNWT may not cover this ethics piece.

To both:
Discuss this piece before the contract is signed and come to an agreement!. Note: Should there be a case where the evaluator finds illegal activities of a criminal nature (i.e. covered by the Criminal Code of Canada) they are bound by the law to report it. That means to the RCMP and as a matter of professional courtesy, to the Deputy Minister of the Department. We recommend that should the evaluator find evidence of gross negligence or malfeasance especially if a population is left at risk, they should inform the appropriate Deputy Minister. If large sums of money are involved, the Comptroller General should be notified.

What about ATIP and the Privacy Laws?

The GNWT contract template includes this statement:

- *(5.12) It should be noted that all information, including documents, submitted to the GNWT are in the custody or under the control of the GNWT and thus subject to the protection and disclosure provisions of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIP). The Contractor acknowledges that the GNWT may be required to release, in whole or in part, the contract and any other information or documents in the GNWT's possession or control relating to this contract pursuant to ATIP.*

- (5.1)The Contractor agrees that all records provided to it shall remain confidential and shall be used only for the purpose for which they were provided, and the Contractor shall not disclose those records or any portion of those records to third parties unless the law provides that such disclosure must be made.

Even though a private contractor is working on behalf of the GNWT, an interested third party cannot call upon them to release confidential information. Once this information is back in the hands of the GNWT however, it may be considered under the ATIP.

Conflict Resolution

- *(5.13) The parties and their employees, agents and representatives shall observe and be bound by the Workplace Conflict Resolution Policy of the GNWT, a copy of which has been received and reviewed by the Contractor.*

- *The Contractor declares that the Contractor has no interest in the business of any third party that would cause a Conflict of Interest in carrying out the Services.*

CONTRACT CLAUSES TO BE AWARE OF

What about the GST?

- *(8.4) The GNWT certifies that the property and services to be purchased by the GNWT are being purchased with government funds and are not, therefore, subject to the Goods and Services Tax.*
- *(8.5) Provided all terms and conditions on the part of the Contractor have been complied with, each invoice will be paid thirty (30) calendar days after receipt of the invoice, or thirty (30) calendar days after delivery of the services, whichever is later. Invoices from Northern Contractors (as defined by the GNWT Business Incentive Policy, 63.02) will be paid twenty (20) calendar days after receipt of the invoice, or twenty (20) calendar days after receipt of the services, whichever is later.*

Insurance

(9.0) The Contractor shall, without limiting his obligations or liabilities hereto, obtain, maintain and pay for *during the period of this agreement, the following insurance with limits not less than those shown:*

a) Workers' Compensation insurance

b) Employer's liability insurance with limits not less than $500,000

C) Motor Vehicle, water craft and snow craft standard liability insurance covering all vehicles and/or craft owned or non-owned, operated and/or licensed by the Contractor and used by the Contractor in the performance of this agreement in an amount not less than one million dollars.

D) Comprehensive General Liability Insurance with limits of not less than two million dollars

e) Professional Liability Insurance with limits of not less than two hundred fifty thousand dollars.

The Contractor shall deposit with the GNWT prior to commencing with the work a certificate of insurance evidencing the insurances) required by this clause in a form satisfactory to the GNWT and with insurance companies satisfactory to the GNWT.

Who Does The Work?

- *(6.4) The Contractor may not assign or delegate work to be done under this contract, or any part thereof, to any other party without the written consent of the GNWT. In the case of a proposed assignment of monies owing to the Contractor under this contract, the consent in writing of the Comptroller General of the GN WT pursuant to S.69(4) of the Financial Administration Act 1988 must be obtained.*

- *(6.5)The Contractor shall keep proper accounts and records of the services for a period of 3 years after the expiry of this agreement. At any time during the term of this contract or the 3 year extension set out herein, the Contractor, upon the request of the GNWT shall produce such accounts and records.*

MANAGING THE CONTRACT

Initial Meeting

When surveyed, both GNWT staff and consultants told us that good clear ongoing communication fostered through regular contact and timely scheduled meetings were important to ensure the best possible outcomes from the evaluation. At the outset, move quickly to arrange an initial meeting with the evaluation consultant. The Project Manager, steering committee members and senior program staff should also attend. As the Project Manager, you want to be proactive, enthusiastic and well organized for this first meeting. This is the time to set the tone for the rest of the project.

At this meeting you should:

- Review the Terms of Reference and the accepted proposal. Make sure that any inconsistencies between the two documents are discussed and are remedied. For example, if the evaluation consultant sets out payment terms that are inconsistent with those of your organization, raise the issue and be clear which schedule will apply.

- Make sure all parties have the same understanding about what is to be done and who is responsible for what tasks. Confirm that everyone understands and agrees to their roles and responsibilities.

- Identify any revisions to the Terms of Reference due to changes in circumstances since they were prepared. For example, any delays encountered in the selection process may require adjustments to the deadlines in the work plan.

- Set up a schedule of meetings throughout the life of the project while everyone is together at this initial meeting. One of our survey respondents noted that canceling a meeting if it isn't needed is much easier than trying to arrange an unscheduled meeting on short notice.

Make sure minutes are taken at this first meeting, as well as all other meetings you have with the consultant. The minutes should reflect any changes to the Terms of Reference or Work plan, the schedule of future meetings, who is responsible for any follow up actions required, and when the tasks are to be done. Provide a copy of the minutes to everyone who attended the meeting as soon as possible.

Working Arrangements with Evaluation Consultants

<u>As Consultant</u>
If you can afford it, you might hire an evaluation consultant to perform a specific piece of work for you. The contractor (you) provides assistance where necessary and facilitates the work of the evaluator by accessing files, making introductions, providing information etc. In this case, you are managing the project.

MANAGING THE CONTRACT

As Project Manager
The evaluation consultant would develop timelines, watch the quality of the data returned, and keep the project on time and on track. This frees the staff from the administrative burden of project management so that they can focus on something else in the office.

As Coach
If your staff are willing to learn, perhaps they want to learn to manage a program evaluation. Maybe you are an experienced manager, but lack evaluation skills. Or it might be that you have very little money to

Project Manager Responsibilities

Once the initial meeting has been held and the contract signed, the next step is to introduce the evaluation team to other key stakeholders, and all program staff not represented on the steering committee. This can be done by phone or in writing but where possible, do it in person. As noted in the first pages of this guide, you want to keep program staff well informed, as their cooperation is necessary for the success of the evaluation and for implementation of its findings.

The Project Manager should make sure there is a regular flow of information to key players. Even if the steering committee members and/or the evaluation consultant are in different regions, stay in touch regularly by phone, email, videoconference or in person.

Once you have selected a proposal, the action phase of the evaluation begins. You've "planned the work" and now you need to "work the plan"! As you get underway, remember that everyone involved has a stake in the evaluation going well and leading to the best possible evaluation results. In addition to working from a good evaluation plan, the relationships between the evaluation consultants), project manager, steering committee, and program staff are very important. Everyone needs to put his or her best efforts into this collaboration to pull it off successfully.

This section discusses seven key areas for the Project Manager to note when working with an external evaluation consultant:

1. Initial meeting
2. Contract
3. Project management
4. Providing feedback
5. Payment
6. Deliverables
7. Evaluating or debriefing the evaluation project

MANAGING THE CONTRACT

Checklist for Suggested Roles and Responsibilities

The Project Director will:

- ❒ Ensure that the GNWT tendering process is followed according to regulations
- ❒ Ensure that the chosen evaluator has the necessary qualifications to carry out the assigned task
- ❒ Recruit and hire the evaluator
- ❒ Ensue that all GNWT contracting requirements are in order
- ❒ Work with the evaluator to define the scope of the evaluation
- ❒ Work with the evaluator to defined the evaluation questions
- ❒ Review and approve the proposed data collection instruments and procedures to ensure that they are compatible with protect activities or client bodies
- ❒ Inform senior management, staff and governing bodies of this evaluation activity
- ❒ Assign project staff for data collection and recordkeeping if required
- ❒ Ensure that informed consent is explained (and documented) to clients who participate in the evaluation
- ❒ Approve the schedule for the evaluation
- ❒ Approve expenditures for the evaluation
- ❒ Approve the final evaluation report

The evaluator will:

- ❒ Work with the manager to define the purpose and scope of the evaluation
- ❒ Work with the manger to clarify the evaluation questions
- ❒ Develop the evaluation design
- ❒ Develop the data collection instruments and procedures
- ❒ Draft the schedule and calendar for all data collection
- ❒ Train the staff in the procedures for collecting the required data
- ❒ Analyze the collected data to answer the evaluation questions
- ❒ Prepare the evaluation report in a manner that suits the different audiences of the evaluation
- ❒ Ensure that all raw data is kept confidential - rolled up data will be returned to the hiring agency (please see Appendix 4 for more information on who owns the data)
- ❒ Comply with the Canadian Evaluation Society's Code of Conduct

MANAGING THE CONTRACT

Access to Program Data

As discussed previously, the Terms of Reference will have outlined the location and format of program data that will be available to the consultants. If you have provided plenty of information at the RFP stage, consultants will have an easier time when accessing data during the evaluation project. Timely access to the data is one of the problems most frequently encountered by the evaluation consultants surveyed. The Project Manager, working with steering committee members and program staff, needs to facilitate the evaluation consultant's access to the program data to help keep the project on track.

Monitoring Progress

In addition to regular meetings and other contacts, another way to keep the project on track is through interim reports. Respondents to our survey suggested that it is important that tentative findings and recommendations be communicated to the Project Manager and steering committee as they arise. If there are serious errors or problems, this allows time for discussion and possible modification before the final report is submitted.

Staying in touch helps avoid surprises. As the evaluation proceeds, if something doesn't fit within the original Terms of Reference, discuss it with your evaluation consultant. If it is a small additional piece of work, such as preparing a presentation of what they found in a survey of program clients, they may be willing to take it on for non-additional charge. For example, during the evaluation of the GNWT's EFAP (Employee and Family Assistance Program) replies to the employee survey trickled in for some time after the deadline. Even though the evaluation consultant was only required to tabulate the data from those questionnaires received by the deadline, as a gesture of good will, she agreed to add in the data from those received later at no additional cost.

If the tasks) are substantial and the evaluation consultant finds no budget flexibility under the existing fee arrangements, you may want to negotiate the addition of a new task to the terms of the project along with additional appropriate payment. For example, if problems are encountered in finding or accessing existing program data, you may need to negotiate the addition of another method of collecting that data if it is important to the outcome of the evaluation.

Feedback

In order to keep the focus on the content of the reports, ask that each report be first submitted as an outline. Outlines allow all parties to come to an agreement on the topics to be covered without getting into group editing of a document.

ETHICAL CONDUCT

Canadian Evaluation Society - Guidelines for Ethical Conduct

Competence

- ❒ Evaluators are to be competent in their provision of service.
- ❒ Evaluators should apply systematic methods of inquiry appropriate to the evaluation.
- ❒ Evaluators should possess or provide content knowledge appropriate for the evaluation.
- ❒ Evaluators should continuously strive to improve their methodological and practice skills.

Integrity

- ❒ Evaluators are to act with integrity in their relationships with all stakeholders.
- ❒ Evaluators should accurately represent their level of skills and knowledge.
- ❒ Evaluators should declare any conflict of interest to clients before embarking on an evaluation project and at any point where such conflict occurs. This includes conflict of interest on the part of either evaluator or stakeholder.
- ❒ Evaluators should be sensitive to the cultural and social environment of all stakeholders and conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to this environment.
- ❒ Evaluators should confer with the client on contractual decisions such as: confidentiality; privacy; communication; and, ownership of findings and reports.

Accountability

- ❒ Evaluators are to be accountable for their performance and their product.
- ❒ Evaluators should be responsible for the provision of information to clients to facilitate their decision-making concerning the selection of appropriate evaluation strategies and methodologies. Such information should include the limitations of selected methodology.
- ❒ Evaluators should be responsible for the clear, accurate, and fair, written and/or oral presentation of study findings and limitations, and recommendations.
- ❒ Evaluators should be responsible in their fiscal decision-making so that expenditures are accounted for and clients receive good value for their dollars.
- ❒ Evaluators should be responsible for the completion of the evaluation within a reasonable time as agreed to with the clients. Such agreements should acknowledge unprecedented delays resulting from factors beyond the evaluator's control.

ETHICAL CONDUCT

Informed Consent

Informed consent does not mean that one simply informs a client about an evaluation and then asks for their consent. So far as possible, evaluators should follow the medical example that follows:

"Informed consent stems from the legal and ethical right an individual has to decide what is done to his or her body, and from the physician's ethical duty to make sure that individuals are involved in decisions about their own health care. The process of securing informed consent has three phases, all of which involve information exchange between doctor and patient and are part of patient education.

- First, in words an individual can understand, the physician must convey the details of a planned procedure or treatment, its potential benefits and serious risks, and any feasible alternatives. The patient should be presented with information on the most likely outcomes of the treatment.
- Second, the physician must evaluate whether or not the person has understood what has been said, must ascertain that the risks have been accepted, and that the patient is giving consent to proceed with the procedure or treatment with full knowledge and forethought.
- Finally, the individual must sign the consent form, which documents in generic format the major points of consideration. It is critical that a patient receive enough information on which to base informed consent, and that the consent is wholly voluntary and has not been forced in any way.

What the above example means for evaluators is that the individual is guaranteed as explanation of what is going on where the data will be used and their right to refuse to participate with out fear of penalty. The potential participant understands them clearly which means that language and culture has to be considered. Finally the evaluator must have consent forms signed as the situation warrants. Working with elders and people less than 10 years of age may have additional considerations.

FEEDBACK TO DRAFTS

When you review an outline, compare what is included with those topics that have already been agreed to in the contract or in meetings. If the topics provided in the outline are not consistent with the topics that have been agreed to, make sure that you let the evaluation consultant know and request a revised outline.

When you're reviewing the draft reports there are a number of things to keep in mind. First, make sure the reports contain no factual errors. Second, make sure that the reports are clear. To keep reports at a readable length, include more technical matters in appendices. Last but not least, remember there are many ways to say the same thing. Before you ask for changes, make sure the changes) you want will improve the accuracy, clarity or quality of the report.

If you have questions or concerns about the conclusions drawn by the evaluation consultant based on the data they have gathered and analyzed, you should ask them what evidence led them to those particular conclusions. It is their job to provide you with their impartial professional opinions even if you disagree or dislike their findings. However, it is appropriate to ask them to correct factual errors, and to revise conclusions based on inaccurate or out-of-date information.

When giving feedback on reports, one program staff member surveyed noted that quick turn around is almost always required. Point out any concerns you have to the evaluation consultant as soon as possible. This allows them to make course corrections if required. In some cases, further work may be delayed until the evaluation consultant reviews the feedback you have provided.

When feedback is provided to the evaluation consultant make sure that it is consistent with other people on the steering committee. Don't put the consultant in the position of needing to decide whose input to act on, and who to ignore. However, the steering committee should be used only as a decision-making or advisory body, and care should be taken not to get them involved in writing the report .

When you're handed a final version of a report or presentation, note if it is on time and review it to see if the content and format is as agreed to in the contract or subsequent meetings, and if there are enough copies provided. If the report has been translated into a language in which you're not fluent, you may want to have it checked for accuracy. If you have problems or concerns with any of the deliverables, contact the evaluation consultant immediately as your silence may be interpreted as acceptance of what has been delivered.

Presentations of the results can be a great way to get more people involved and aware of what you've done on this evaluation project and what action should be taken on it. Work with your consultant to make sure that the right people hear what you have to say. It is always a good idea to present findings to program staff or other project participants first. Be innovative in the way you present results, and use different methods for different audiences, depending on their needs or interests. Make sure that the people that contributed their time and their stories are acknowledged and thanked. For example, if respondents to a survey or focus group were promised a copy of the results send them out the executive summary. Make sure copies of the reports) are distributed as promised and required. Posting the final report on the Internet may be a useful way to be sure that interested parties can read it.

ADMINISTRATION

Payments

Often progress payments are tied to delivery of reports or achieving some other milestones. When you receive an invoice from the evaluation consultant, check to be sure that it is consistent with the budget and payment schedule agreed to. If so, quickly process the payment as agreed to in your contract.

Use of the Report

As the contractor, you paid for this evaluation report. You have the right to use the report anyway you wish, unless there are provisions in the contract body about the use of intellectual property that have been negotiated with the consultant.

The information can be consolidated, used in reports, brochures, presentations, etc. **This does *not* mean that a contractor can change the findings of the report and then present the data as the findings of an independent contractor.** That would be dishonest. Paraphrasing report findings if fine too, as long at the original idea is maintained and not presented out of context.

Many professions present their findings only in PDF format as their findings must be protected as written. Accountants and auditors use their professional credentials to sign off on their work. Users of their reports need to know that the data has been verified and will stand up to the scrutiny of the professional association. Evaluators in Canada, the United States and Australia may soon follow suit.

We recommend that the form of the deliverable be negotiated up front before the contract is signed.

DEBRIEFING THE EVALUATION

Having paid the final invoice and arranged presentations) of the results, you may be tempted to sit back and think that the project is over. It isn't. The final phase of the evaluation project needs to happen before all is wrapped up.

Evaluating the evaluation is important. Although this is not common practice, it was noted by a number of consultants surveyed, that this would be extremely helpful. A review of the evaluation process helps point out what could be improved for the next time. Talk with the consultant about what went well and what didn't and how it could be improved. Look back at how relationships between the parties involved worked, and how the evaluation plans unfolded. This review can help evaluation consultants improve their approach on future projects and can help you and your organization benefit from lessons learned.

How will you rate the quality of the evaluation? Compare your experience to the GNWT's standards for Program Evaluation. Program Evaluation within the GNWT needs to be performed with competence, reliability and credibility so that the end product has value for the department. The following statements are the criterion by which all evaluations should be carried out.

1.0 Evaluation Planning

Standard

The department must apply the discipline of evaluation to assess the performance of its policies, programs and initiatives, both departmental and inter-organizational.

Guidance

- the evaluation committee should develop an evaluation plan that is based on assessment of risk, departmental priorities, reporting requirements, and priorities of the government as a whole
- the full range of evaluation issues should be considered at the planning stage of an evaluation (such as timing, resources, scope, confidentiality etc)
- the relevance of any policy, program or initiative should be considered during its evaluation - i.e. is it consistent with priorities, does it address an actual need, is it relevant to the people that it is trying to serve
- the evaluation should attempt to determine if the policy, program or initiative is effective in meeting its objectives, and within budget and
- the evaluation should attempt to determine if the most appropriate means are being used to achieve the program goals.

DEBRIEFING THE EVALUATION

2.0 Competency

Standard

The person or persons carrying out evaluations, or evaluation related work, must possess or collectively possess the knowledge and competence necessary to fulfil the requirements of the particular evaluation work.

Guidance

- ❒ Evaluators should possess or ensure the provision of knowledge appropriate for the evaluation and continuously strive to improve their methodological and practice skills.

In order to develop valid, credible and unbiased conclusions and recommendations, evaluators should possess knowledge, skills and experience in:

- ❒ the application of sound research design that enable them to answer the chosen questions
- ❒ the collection and analysis of reliable quantitative and qualitative data and
- ❒ the ability to make judgements on the data.

3.0 Objectivity and Integrity

Standard

Individuals performing evaluation work must be free from impairments that hinder their objectivity and must act with integrity in their relationships with all stakeholders.

Guidance

Evaluators should:

- ❒ accurately represent their level of skills and knowledge and
- ❒ declare any matter that could compromise their objectivity before embarking on an evaluation project or at any point during the project.

Evaluators should be accountable for their performance and their products and for:

- ❒ ensuring that their work addresses the priority concerns and accountability requirements of departmental management and the government
- ❒ conferring with stakeholders on decisions such as confidentiality, privacy, communications and ownership of findings and reports
- ❒ ensuring sound fiscal decision-making so that expenditures are accounted for and clients receive good value for their dollars and
- ❒ completing the evaluation work within a reasonable time as agreed to with the clients.

DEBRIEFING THE EVALUATION

4.0 Consultation and Advice

Standard
Evaluation work must incorporate sufficient and appropriate consultation and, where appropriate, apply the advice and guidance of specialists and other knowledgeable persons.

Guidance
- ❒ Evaluators should consult major stakeholders when conducting their work
- ❒ Where appropriate, peer review groups should be organised to review evaluation products to improve their quality and enhance the sharing of best practices

5.0 Measurement and Analysis

Standard
Evaluation work must produce timely, pertinent and credible findings and conclusions that managers and other stakeholders can use with confidence, based on practical, cost-effective and objective data collection and analysis.

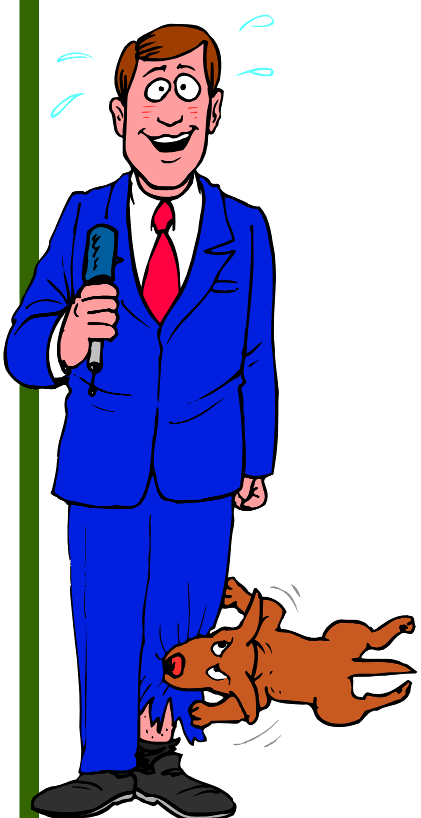
Guidance
- ❒ Evaluation products should be made available at the most appropriate time to aid management decision-making
- ❒ Evaluation findings should be relevant to the issues addressed and flow from the evidence
- ❒ Evaluation products should be useful to managers in improving performance and reporting on results achieved.

DEBRIEFING THE EVALUATION

6.0 Reporting

Standard

Evaluation reports must present the findings, conclusions and recommendations in a clear and objective manner.



Guidance

Evaluation reports should be written so that senior managers and external readers can understand the issues being reported. They should:

- be concise and clearly written
- include information that is needed for a proper understanding of the findings, conclusions and recommendations
- present the conclusions and recommendations so that they flow logically from evaluation findings
- clearly expose the limits of the evaluation in terms of scope, methods and conclusions
- provide the reader with appropriate context by describing the purpose and timing of the work, the policy, program or initiative that was evaluated, how it fits into the overall operations of the organisation
- provide an accurate assessment of the results that have been achieved by the policy, program or initiative
- provide relevant analysis and explanation of any significant problems and contain clear and actionable recommendations
- In view of transparency, once client confidentiality is protected, the report should be made available to program staff and partners and available for public discussion, unless the Minister chooses to withhold it.

FINAL CHECK

DID YOU?.......

❒ Arrange an initial meeting with your consultant and steering committee ?

❒ Review and revise as necessary, the Terms of Reference with all parties?

❒ Set up a schedule of meetings throughout the life of the project?

❒ Take minutes and provide everyone with copies of what was agreed upon?

❒ Sign a formal contract with the revised Terms of Reference appended?

❒ Make very clear confidential or sensitive issues?

❒ Introduce the consultants to all key stakeholders?

❒ Ensure that program data and other information was available to the consultants?

❒ Plan for interim reports to monitor progress?

❒ Negotiate changes to the budget as necessary?

❒ Establish a feedback process for sharing information on reports submitted by the consultants?

❒ Adhere strictly to your payment schedule?

❒ Review the final products to ensure that what was provided is what had been agreed upon?

❒ Make sure that program staff were promptly informed of any results?

❒ Make sure that all contributors were recognized and thanked?

❒ Debrief and evaluate your evaluation?