MONITORING & EVALUATION
ShortCuts

Guidelines on Managing and Implementing a Successful Evaluation

Managing and Implementing an Evaluation

September 2008

Introduction

This edition of *Short Cuts* provides guidance on how to manage and implement an evaluation. The *Managing and Implementing an Evaluation* module's goal is to increase the quality of an organization's M&E activities through a well-managed evaluation. It highlights the necessary skills that an evaluation manager needs and explains the Managing an Evaluation Checklist (see exhibit 1).

This edition of Short Cuts emphasizes two key elements from the *Managing and Implementing an Evaluation* module:

1. Necessary skills—or attributes—of an evaluation manager
2. Understanding the Managing an Evaluation Checklist

Steps to Managing and Implementing an Evaluation

Step 1
Choose the Right Evaluation Manager and Define the Evaluation Manager's Role

Step 2
Use the Managing an Evaluation Checklist

Step 1 Choose the Right Evaluation Manager and Define the Evaluation Manager's Role

Part of the challenge in managing an evaluation is that an organization rarely has extra staff dedicated to M&E who can be detailed for the duration of an evaluation, and the job can fall to staff who are less contractually critical to project implementation. The staff member is often also more junior and younger than the evaluator, so the evaluator may consider the evaluation manager to be support staff if the role is not clearly delineated for the organization, the staff involved, and the consultant. The role of the evaluation manager is to ensure that the evaluation runs smoothly.

There are seven talents that a good evaluation manager should have (see text box). Not only will these help to identify the best evaluation manager, they will also enhance the evaluation manager's performance and the quality of the evaluation. It is better not to think of the evaluation manager as the sole project staff member responsible for the success of an evaluation; instead, think of the evaluation manager as the principal contact for the evaluation. The evaluation manager will contribute to an evaluation's success or failure.

> **7 Talents of a Good Evaluation Manager**
>
> PERSONAL
> * Organizational ability
> * Institutional memory
> * Knowledge of evaluation or methods
> * A serious attitude
> * People skills
> * Sense of humor
>
> ORGANIZATIONAL
> * Support system

Strong organizational ability is the hallmark of the most successful evaluation managers. These managers maintain and update schedules and make sure that papers and other deliverables are well-structured and timely. Think about who has this ability in your office. This might be a good first step in identifying an in-house evaluation manager.

Institutional memory is another important skill of a good evaluation manager. S/he should already know the organization and the project well enough to answer questions from the evaluator. While some evaluators will work for an organization many times, organizations do change staff, and it is helpful to have an evaluation manager who can answer questions about the organization, its history, and internal roles and responsibilities. It is even more helpful if that individual is also knowledgeable about the project. Having an evaluation manager with good institutional memory probably means that s/he will not be a summer intern, but it could be a local staff person assigned to the project manager's office from the start of the project.

Having a strong knowledge of evaluation or methods is another attribute of good evaluation managers. This skill will make communicating with the evaluator easier. And it will be easier to communicate with the rest of the project staff about revisions to the methods or why different tasks take longer. Probably the best selection for an evaluation manager is someone who has already participated in an evaluation, preferably in the same country, and will therefore have a specific frame of reference for the methods being discussed. It is recommended that the evaluation manager review training materials and reading lists ahead of time and become familiar with the evaluation vocabulary. This process should be part of the evaluation scope of work (SOW), so that building staff capacity can be an integral part of the evaluation process.

Someone with a **serious attitude** can also be a trusted evaluation manager. This is an unusual quality. A junior person frequently does not have the personal resources to be credible when they are making decisions or organizing resources. Look for a person that both the project and the country staff routinely go to when they want to address a work problem, someone they trust will be able to find a solution that is fair and just.

People skills is perhaps the easiest talent to identify. Who remembers birthdays and family events, and will listen to staff problems? Think of someone who is a genuinely nice person and who wants to help. Most people who work in international development want to help, but not everyone can connect emotionally. Having the ability to make that personal connection creates an atmosphere more conducive to open communication and contributes to a task where people are willing to work and to adapt to changes in a schedule.

Having a **sense of humor** is another important skill for evaluation managers as they need to set the tone for an evaluation, which is often a very stressful event. The evaluation manager can help reduce stress through a judicious use of people skills that lets people connect. And if the humor is culturally sensitive, all the better. Evaluators frequently use these strategies to lessen tensions and let people relax. Because the evaluation manager will often be seen as the timekeeper or the gatekeeper, being able to joke about his/her role may soften the process.

Finally, a strong **organizational support system** is extremely critical for the evaluation manager. This support system provides someone (or a group of people) that the evaluation manager can go to for emotional support, for management insights, for vetting different ideas, or for other tasks. It need not be the project manager—except for budget or personnel matters—but it should be someone with whom the evaluation manager already has a relationship where there is mutual trust on both sides.

Step 2 Use the Managing an Evaluation Checklist

The Managing an Evaluation Checklist (see exhibit 1) is designed to give the evaluation manager a quick way to assess the status of different tasks during the evaluation process, starting from the scope of work and continuing through deliverables and contingency plans. The 11 major tasks on the checklist are as follows:

1. Scope of work
2. Personnel
3. Financial
4. Logistical
5. Relations
6. Psychological elements
7. Contractual
8. Deliverables
9. Communication
10. Workplan and timeline
11. Contingency plans

Each task is defined in more detail in the full module. Each task can be broken down into smaller tasks that will vary depending on how the PVO organizes the evaluation. The evaluation manager needs to take charge of tracking the different tasks (both major and smaller), even though the evaluation manager may not be the person responsible for accomplishing individual tasks. For example, contractual issues are likely to be handled by the management office, while financial issues would be the responsibility of the budget or accounting office. Where elements may need changing (for example, extending the length of the contract or otherwise modifying the scope), the evaluation manager should track the approval process so that the lines of communication between the evaluation manager and the evaluators are clear.

Exhibit 1: Managing an Evaluation Checklist

Major Task	Tasks	Lead Person or Office	Status	Due Date	Date Completed	Approval Needed	Comments
Scope of Work	Scope of work drafted						
	Consultant(s) identified						
	Scope of work finalized						
Personnel	Consultant references checked						
	Project staff deployed (assigned & existing workload reallocated for duration of evaluation)						
	Team assembled						
	Teambuilding meeting conducted						
Financial	Evaluation budget developed						
	Consultant fees negotiated						
	Per diem and travel advances arranged for local and international staff						
	Evaluation budget revised						
	Expense report and invoice forms sent to consultant(s)						
	Timing and instructions for expense reports provided to consultant(s)						
Logistical	Vehicles and drivers arranged						
	Translators arranged						
	Additional staff arranged						
	Lodging arranged near main office						
	Lodging arranged up-country						
	Airline tickets arranged						
	Visas, work permits, security clearances arranged						
	Support staff and office space arranged						
Relations	Stakeholders (PVO, donor, ministries) notified						
	Scope of work circulated with team leader resume						
	Communities engaged in/aware of evaluation timing and purpose						
	Communication schedule worked out between evaluation manager and project manager						
Psychological Elements	Evaluation manager mentor chosen						
	Safety valve for evaluation team developed (weekend options, half day excursions, etc.)						
	Staff engaged in/aware of evaluation timing and purpose, implications of shifting workloads						

Exhibit 1: Managing an Evaluation Checklist (continued)

Major Task	Tasks	Lead Person or Office	Status	Due Date	Date Completed	Approval Needed	Comments
Contractual	Contract(s) finalized for consultant(s)						
	Logistical arrangements finalized						
	Signed copies of contracts received						
Deliverables	Deliverables negotiated with consultants						
	Organizational deliverables assigned with timeframes						
	Review period (consolidating comments)						
	Revision period/final approval						
Communication	Schedule worked out between evaluation manager and evaluation team leader (type of communication, day of the week, time, etc.)						
	Schedule worked out between evaluation manager and project manager (type of communication, day of the week, time, etc.)						
	Protocol for contacting local authorities and mechanism ready for when communities are chosen for field visits						
	Communication options (local cell phones, VSAT, shortwave radio, etc.) arranged						
Workplan and Timeline	Evaluation process milestones developed with consultant(s)						
	Evaluation process defined and tasks allocated among evaluation team						
	Milestones mapped on calendar						
	Workplan/timeline written out and distributed with tasks highlighted						
Contingency Plans	Medevac insurance purchased for consultants						
	Emergency contact numbers organized						
	Security briefing given to consultant(s)						
	Contingency plan packet distributed (weather, political unrest, etc.)						

In working through the sample checklist (see exhibit 2, below), the data in the table are explained in the corresponding text immediately below. Note that this is a sample evaluation checklist, assuming that this is a mid-term evaluation scheduled for October – November of the third year of a five-year project. The date for the checklist is October 15th, which means that the team has already arrived in the field and that the evaluation is underway.

With the Managing an Evaluation Checklist, the evaluation manager can shade tasks in the past, or highlight tasks that require management action. This will help to keep track of what still needs to be done, and the file can be password protected so that only one person can update the file. People can read the file or send in updates, but only the single owner of the document can update the file; with this process, there is less confusion about what has been accomplished.

Exhibit 2: Sample Managing an Evaluation Checklist

Major Task	Tasks	Lead Person or Office	Status	Due Date	Date Completed	Approval Needed	Comments	Short Cut Key
Scope of Work	Scope of work drafted	Project Manager	Done	15-Mar	15-Mar	No	Sent to first choice consultant for review; also to home office M&E Advisor. Project manager forgot that there was an existing format until the last minute.	1
	Consultant(s) identified	Project Manager	Done	30-Apr	15-Apr	Yes	Approval from donor required; submitted in quarterly report. Email received with approval on 15 July	
	Scope of work finalized	Project Manager	Done	30-May	1-May	Yes	Approval from donor required; submitted in quarterly report. Email received with approval on 15 July	
Personnel	Consultant references checked	Project Manager	Done	30-Aug	15-Aug	No	Prior experience with consultant expedited the review; also checked with another PVO office	2
	Project staff deployed (assigned and existing workload reallocated for duration of evaluation)	Project Manager	Done	15-Sep	1-Sep	Yes	Project manager needed to coordinate with manager of another project to ensure that desired staff were available; options were discussed in a senior staff meeting with the country director	
	Team assembled	Project Manager	Done	1-Aug	15-Sep	Yes	Took longer for desired team to come together because of home leave and R and R schedules over the summer	
	Teambuilding meeting conducted	Evaluation Manager	Done	30-Sep	30-Sep	No	Evaluation manager held teambuilding meeting once lead evaluator arrived in country	

Exhibit 2: Sample Managing an Evaluation Checklist (continued)

Major Task	Tasks	Lead Person or Office	Status	Due Date	Date Completed	Approval Needed	Comments	Short Cut Key
Financial	Evaluation budget developed	Finance Officer	Done	15-Mar	1-Mar	Yes	Budget developed as part of SOW, needed review by finance office to ensure that there were sufficient funds.	3
	Consultant fees negotiated	Contracts Office	Done	1-Aug	31-Jul	Yes	Preferred consultant's rates had increased by 5% over budget estimates, but project manager had known about this and was prepared to increase line item.	
	Per diem and travel advances arranged for local and international staff	Finance Officer	Done	15-Sep	15-Sep	Yes	Evaluation manager arranged for this with the finance office, having prepared all the materials ahead of time based on budget estimates. Evaluation Manager had told finance office to expect the forms and process the payments prior to team's arrival.	
	Evaluation budget revised	Finance Officer	Done	15-Aug	10-Aug	Yes	Evaluation manager is keeping a copy of this, which needed approval from the project manager because they negotiated an addition to the days allocated and the number of days were therefore slightly higher than budgeted.	
	Expense report and invoice forms sent to consultant(s)	Evaluation Manager	Done	n/a	1-Aug	No	Evaluation manager sent this with an orientation packet once the evaluator was identified and approved.	
	Timing and instructions for expense reports provided to consultant(s)	Evaluation Manager	Done	n/a	1-Aug	No	Evaluation manager sent this with an orientation packet once the evaluator was identified and approved.	

Short Cut Key #1 In this section, the key point is that clearance from the donor generally takes several months (unless a specific email is sent from the evaluation manager about this point). If the donor had not approved the candidate, this project would still have had several months to find an alternative, but the pool of available consultants would have become smaller, as the best people are booked a long time in advance.

Short Cut Key #2 One deadline was missed, although this did not affect the evaluation's start up. It is difficult to arrange for additional or replaced workloads and the project manager clearly tried to start the process earlier, but got caught up in the usual summer schedule of vacations and home leave.

Exhibit 2: Sample Managing an Evaluation Checklist (continued)

Major Task	Tasks	Lead Person or Office	Status	Due Date	Date Completed	Approval Needed	Comments	Short Cut Key
Logistical	Vehicles and drivers arranged	Evaluation Manager	Done	25-Sep	15-Sep	Yes	Evaluation Manager contacted logistics office to arrange for vehicles and drivers.	4,5
	Translators arranged	Evaluation Manager	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	No translators needed; project staff will translate - this would have been an additional cost.	
	Additional staff arranged	Evaluation Manager	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	No additional staff are needed for this evaluation.	
	Lodging arranged near main office	Evaluation Manager	Done	15-Sep	30-Aug	No	Initial reservation made via phone with preferred hotel as soon as dates were finalized for initial stay.	
	Lodging arranged up-country	Evaluation Manager	Pending	5-Oct	15-Oct	No	Precise travel schedule still in flux; Evaluation manager will need to monitor situation and revise reservations as needed.	
	Airline tickets arranged	Evaluation Manager	Done	30-Aug	20-Aug	No	Consultant had initiated process; Evaluation manager needed to authorize ticket, done in a phone call to the local travel agent for the PVO.	
	Visas, work permits, security clearances arranged	Evaluation Manager	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	Consultant already had necessary visa for multiple entries.	
	Support staff/ office space arranged	Evaluation Manager	Done	25-Sep	25-Sep	Yes	Accomplished during project staff meeting; formalized in meeting notes.	
	Airport pickup/ dropoffs arranged	Evaluation Manager	Done	25-Sep	25-Sep	No	Arranged in a phone call with the security office.	

Short Cut Key #3 No real problems, although some of the benchmarks were very close. Having a close relationship with the finance office and giving them all the paperwork almost completed no doubt helped in expediting the process.

Short Cut Key #4 If a task on the checklist is not needed, either delete that line or simply put n/a (not applicable) in the space.

Short Cut Key #5 Up-country travel schedules are often difficult to predict; sometimes evaluations choose to stay longer in a more central location to the fieldwork sites, so there is a base of operations and the teams can spread out. Not knowing which field sites will be visited means that there will not be much time to notify the communities in advance, so the focus groups might have much more limited participation than is ideal.

Exhibit 2: Sample Managing an Evaluation Checklist (continued)

Major Task	Tasks	Lead Person or Office	Status	Due Date	Date Completed	Approval Needed	Comments	Short Cut Key
Relations	Stakeholders (PVO, donor, ministries) notified	Evaluation Manager	Done	15-Aug	10-Aug	No	Evaluation manager circulated notification with team leader resume in an email to relevant stakeholders.	6,7
	Scope of work circulated with team leader resume	Evaluation Manager	Done	15-Aug	10-Aug	No	Evaluation manager circulated notification with team leader resume in an email to relevant stakeholders	
	Communities engaged in/ aware of evaluation timing and purpose	Evaluation Manager	Done	20-Sep	15-Sep	Yes	Evaluation manager developed formal letter, signed by project manager, circulated to all communities during monthly supervisory meetings	
	Communication schedule worked out between Evaluation Manager and project manager	Evaluation Manager	Overdue	1-Oct		No	Evaluation manager met with team leader but has yet to come to an agreement on communication schedule	
	Evaluation manager and team leader meet to determine working style for the evaluation	Evaluation Manager	Done	2-Oct	2-Oct	No	Evaluation manager and team leader met after team planning meeting to discuss working styles	
Psychological Elements	Evaluation manager mentor chosen	Project Manager	Done	n/a	n/a	No	Project manager will serve as mentor	8
	Safety valve for evaluation team developed (weekend options, half-day excursions, etc.)	Evaluation Manager	Pending	n/a	n/a	No	Evaluation manager has list of options for lead evaluator and team; waiting for weekly phone call to reserve possibilities	
	Staff engaged in/aware of evaluation timing and purpose, implications of shifting workloads	Project Manager	Overdue	15-Jul		No	Project manager has delayed presentation until arrival of team leader despite reassigning staff to compensate for those participating in evaluation.	

<u>**Short Cut Key #6**</u> The evaluation manager has done a good job arranging for multiple different logistics—— everything has been done in a timely manner (except one element in number 7).

<u>Short Cut Key #7</u> Communication is absolutely critical between the evaluation manager and the project manager. Too much or too little communication can result in poor decisions. If the evaluation manager cannot come to some agreement before the evaluator leaves for the field, then the project manager may need to impose a communication schedule on both of them. Having this element in red should be a good visual clue for the project manager during routine meetings with the evaluation manager that this is something to be addressed. In a worst case scenario, evaluation communication may need to be redirected from the evaluator to the project manager and then to the evaluation manager. But adding this additional layer will diminish the evaluation manager's efficiency.

<u>Short Cut Key #8</u> The safety valve mechanism is less critical as most team members will be thrilled just to have a half-day of free time and do not necessarily need entertainment. What is more critical for the entire evaluation and the participating staff is the delay by the project manager in presenting the evaluation scope to the project staff. This delay can increase anxiety and resistance, and can make the evaluator's job much harder (because s/he will have to spend more time reassuring staff about the purpose of the evaluation). This may also indicate that the evaluation manager is not able to manage strong personalities and bigger stakeholders in the evaluation. It is always possible, of course, that the staff are sufficiently experienced or that the project manager's personality is sufficient to carry this off without much more advance notice. It is a significant concern, however.

Exhibit 2: Sample Managing an Evaluation Checklist (continued)								
Major Task	Tasks	Lead Person or Office	Status	Due Date	Date Completed	Approval Needed	Comments	Short Cut Key
Contractual	Contract(s) finalized for consultant(s)	Evaluation Manager	Done	30-Aug	20-Aug	Yes	Contracts office updated an older form with the lead consultant	9
	Logistic arrangements finalized	Evaluation Manager	Done	30-Aug	20-Aug	Yes	Contracts office updated an older form with the lead consultant	
	Signed copies of contracts received	Evaluation Manager	Done	30-Aug	25-Aug	Yes	Consultant contract scanned and sent signed copy upon receipt	
Deliverables	Deliverables negotiated with consultants	Evaluation Manager	Mostly done	30-Aug	2-Oct	Yes	Contracts office signed off on contract; consultant still dubious about evaluation manager capacity-building element but signed because of prior history with PVO	10, 11
	Organizational deliverables assigned with timeframes	Evaluation Manager	Done	10-Nov		No	Consultant to provide based on pace of fieldwork	
	Review period for consolidating comments	Evaluation Manager		30-Nov		No		
	Revision period/final approval	Evaluation Manager		10-Dec		Yes		

Exhibit 2: Sample Managing an Evaluation Checklist (continued)

Major Task	Tasks	Lead Person or Office	Status	Due Date	Date Completed	Approval Needed	Comments	Short Cut Key
Communication	Schedule worked out between evaluation manager and evaluation team leader (type of communication, day of the week, time, etc.)	Evaluation Manager	Pending	2-Oct	10-Aug	No	Team leader very resistant to evaluation manager accompanying evaluation team; may need arbitration from project manager	12
	Protocol for contacting local authorities and mechanism ready for when communities are chosen for field visits	Evaluation Manager	Done	15-Sep	10-Oct	No	Evaluation manager contacted communities through local channels (cellphones, etc.) as soon as sites were identified	
	Communication options (local cell phones, VSAT, shortwave radio, etc.) arranged	Evaluation Manager	Done	15-Sep	15-Sep	No	Evaluation manager arranged local cellphone for lead consultant; all vehicles accompanying evaluation will routinely have VSAT	
Work plan and timeline	Evaluation process milestones developed with consultant(s)	Evaluation Manager	Done	4-Oct	1-Oct	No	Initial discussions held prior to consultant arrival in-country; revised over dinner the first night based on best guesstimates of completion. Still some ongoing discussion about scope of capacity-building for evaluation manager	13,14
	Evaluation process defined and tasks allocated among evaluation team	Evaluation Manager	Done	1-Oct	4-Oct	No	Initiated during team planning meeting and written up by evaluation manager over the weekend with input from team leader	
	Milestones mapped on calendar	Evaluation Manager with team leader	In progress	10-Oct	Pending	No	Evaluation manager is overburdened with initial logistics and could not complete task by due date; estimated completion date is Oct 22	
	Work plan/timeline written out and distributed with tasks highlighted	Evaluation Manager	In progress	10-Oct	Pending	No	Evaluation manager overburdened with initial logistics, could not complete task by due date; estimated completion date is Oct 22	

Short Cut Key #9 The contracts office is clearly experienced and able to manage such a straightforward contract. No problems noted, encountered, or anticipated.

Short Cut Key #10 Most of the deliverables are still pending, which is completely normal at this stage of the evaluation.

<u>Short Cut Key #11</u> With respect to the deliverables in the evaluation SOW, the capacity-building for the evaluation manager is more critical. Given the difficulties the two have already encountered in communication, this could be very difficult to manage. It is likely that the evaluation manager will push for this, and the evaluator is equally likely to push back by complaining to the project manager about not having enough time to concentrate on the primary task. This may require some additional negotiation by the project manager to ensure that the evaluation manager does get some capacity building, but it is within fairly small parameters that work primarily for the evaluator.

<u>Short Cut Key #12</u> The communities have finally been contacted, and there will hopefully be enough notice before the field visits occur so that there will be more sufficient numbers of people for focus group interviews. The team leader and the evaluation manager have worked out a communication schedule, but the team leader emphatically does not want the evaluation manager in the field with the team. There are generally good reasons for this decision; a central contact point is needed for decisions and communications, and it is easier to do this from the country headquarters. The evaluation manager would benefit from seeing how the evaluation operates in the field, and at least being an observer to some of the field practices. It may require additional mediation or outright coaxing from the project manager for this to happen without further adverse conditions on the evaluation process.

<u>Short Cut Key #13</u> The communication and concern about the capacity-building aspects continue. The project manager is going to have to step in, with a possible solution of having the evaluation manager work with the evaluator at the end of the fieldwork to contribute to the fieldwork analysis, so the capacity building will focus more on the use of the evaluation and less on the data collection mechanics.

<u>Short Cut Key #14</u> More troubling is that the evaluation manager has not been able to devote the time needed to create the organizational frameworks to keep track of the evaluation's progress. The project manager (in the role of mentor) should query this during their routine meetings; the evaluation manager may need technical help in creating those flowcharts or simply an afternoon to concentrate on those tasks. Having the graphic is clearly not critical, but it is very helpful to keep track of where things are and what still needs to be done.

Exhibit 2: Sample Managing an Evaluation Checklist (continued)								
Major Task	Tasks	Lead Person or Office	Status	Due Date	Date Completed	Approval Needed	Comments	Short Cut Key
Contingency Plans	Medevac insurance purchased for consultants	Evaluation Manager via contracts office	Done	15-Sep	12-Sep	No	Email sent to consultant to verify continued coverage	15
	Emergency contact numbers organized	Evaluation Manager	Done	15-Sep	12-Sep	No	Evaluation manager updated records from last evaluation; slight delay in making sure all team members had the same coverage	
	Security briefing given to consultant(s)	Evaluation Manager with security office	Done	1-Oct	1-Oct	No	Security office representative met consultant at airport to go over briefing elements and provide emergency numbers and local phone	
	Contingency plan packet distributed (weather, political unrest, etc.)	Evaluation Manager with security office	Done	15-Sep	20-Sep	Yes	Project manager needed to approve the decision tree leading to postponement or other actions; also needed to be reviewed by country director to make sure it was in line with PVO policies	

<u>Short Cut Key #15</u> No real problems in this section. The project manager should meet with the country director to make sure that the contingency plans are in line with the organization's policies and in accordance with the organization's own contingency plans for most of those events.

Concluding Remarks

As with any evaluation, some tasks will be done on time and others will not. There may be personality clashes and some personalities that will work well together. There will be challenges in getting an evaluation accomplished given the resources available, whether it is in terms of time or budget. The evaluation manager's job is to ensure that the different tasks for an evaluation are tracked and accomplished, and smooth the path for the evaluation. Completing these tasks in a timely manner will help to ensure a successful evaluation. This is not an easy exercise, and an organization should cultivate and support staff who can serve as evaluation managers and help create a process where the evaluation is not only done, but is done well and serves a useful purpose for those interested in its findings.