Canadian International Development Agency

Agence canadienne de développement international

How to Perform Evaluations -

Evaluation Workplans

Canada

EVALUATION WORKPLANS

PERFORMANCE REVIEW BRANCH

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About this Series…

Performance Review Branch (PRB) makes available information tools to help improve performance measurement and reporting.

"How to Perform Evaluations" guides describe working standards and expectations for completing individual tasks.

Bringing a Focus to…

USING THIS GUIDE

Well–devised workplans lead to professional evaluation results

Once a contract is in place, evaluators are expected to prepare evaluation workplans, often within limited time periods. This Guide sets out CIDA's management expectations for completing this deliverable.

Evaluators are provided with a comprehensive understanding of what is to be addressed, with information requirements identified by essential reporting element.

Guidelines are provided for preparing the following sections:

☑ Investment overview
☑ Expectations for the evaluation
☑ Accountabilities and responsibilities
☑ Evaluation methodology
☑ Evaluation framework
☑ Reporting requirements
☑ Work scheduling

Evaluators should follow this Guide step–by–step to ensure conformity with CIDA's standards for workplan preparation.

Note: PRB's "CIDA Evaluation Guide" elaborates on workplan preparation.

see Chapter 9

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PURPOSE OF WORKPLANS

Evaluators are encouraged to bring their ideas and insights to evaluation design so as CIDA can maximize value–added.

Evaluation workplans:

☑ Provide an opportunity for evaluators to build on the initial ideas and parameters set out in the Terms of Reference (TORs) to identify what is feasible, suggest refinements and provide elaboration.

☑ Evaluation workplans link evaluation design with what CIDA wants to accomplish, guiding performance to meet expectations.

☑ Inform evaluations by identifying what process is to be followed, who is to do what, and when tasks are to be completed.

☑ Serve as the key reference for managing delivery throughout the performance of contract.

It is important that both parties depart the planning process with a clear and singular understanding of how the evaluation is to be carried out. The approved workplan then functions as an agreement between the Agency and the evaluator, establishing the best approach for meeting evaluation objectives.

Focusing on Results

Workplans should be geared towards producing findings, recommendations and lessons learned that focus on:

☑ How CIDA's subject investment has performed in achieving the outputs, outcomes and impacts it was designed to produce, and

☑ What can be learned from activities in the field that could have value for future investments.

Evaluators should: 1) design activities that respond to the Agency's "Framework of Results and Key Success Factors", and 2) incorporate CIDA's Results–Based Management principles, guidelines and practices.

Questions & Answers

Before you start, a quick read of the
following may prove useful.

Q: *How long should evaluation workplans be?*

A: The answer hinges totally on the characteristics and complexities of the evaluation being carried out. In general, the level of detail should be adequate to effectively inform and control the evaluation. Evaluators should strive to keep workplans clear, concise and precise in meeting this objective.

Q: *What sources of information are available?*

A: Evaluators are expected to perform a thorough review of all relevant information sources to bring a fully informed perspective to workplan preparation. CIDA's evaluation manager is be consulted to learn about information availability (and to be apprised of progress). Sources include: 1) TORs, 2) Performance Frameworks, 3) literature searches and file reviews, 4) the Agency's Corporate Memory System, 5) consultations with CIDA personnel, stakeholders and others having knowledge relevant to the investment (face–to–face meetings, phone, e–mail).

Q: *How are trips to developing countries organized?*

A: Evaluations typically call for a mission to the developing country to allow for information gathering on site. Travel logistics and cost projections are addressed during evaluation planning. Protocols for functioning in the developing country are usually handled by CIDA's evaluation manager in consultation with CIDA's desk officer and post personnel.

Q: *How are evaluation workplans approved?*

A: Once the evaluator has refined the workplan to a standard that meets expectations (in consultation with CIDA's evaluation manager), it is put forward for approval by CIDA. With approval, the post is notified of what is expected of the field so as adequate preparations can be made.

What should a workplan look like?

Here, we identify the key components that should be addressed, describing expectations for content and detail.

1 Overview of Investment

Briefly profile the investment being evaluated, with text being limited to one–to–two pages. Describe the investment structure and country context. Summarize expected results (outputs, outcomes, impacts) from performance frameworks.

Identify:

- Linkages to CIDA's mandate and corporate priorities.

- Reach – identifying intended beneficiaries

- Level of investment, and

- Stakeholder participation to date.

Checklist

- Is the reader left with a clear understanding of the initiative being evaluated and its linkages to CIDA's mandate and corporate priorities?

- Are expected results, reach and level of investment addressed?

- Has the role of stakeholders to date been described?

2 Expectations of Evaluation

Describe:

- CIDA's reasons for proceeding with the evaluation

- The focus for identifying results (e.g. actual vs. expected results; CIDA's "Framework")

- Any issues that the Agency wishes to emphasize (e.g. gender equality)

- The importance of lessons learned, and

- Any other information expected to be derived.

References should be made to all official documents.

Checklist

- Is the reasoning supporting management's decision to carry out this evaluation clearly explained?

- Are management's expectations for this assessments precisely articulated?

- Is the requirement to develop lessons learned identified?

3 Accountabilities and Responsibilities

The workplan should:

Profile the composition of the evaluator's team identifying each individual's primary role and responsibilities (résumés may be attached), and

Identify CIDA representatives, describing roles and responsibilities for CIDA's evaluation manager, advisory committee members, PRB representatives, regional consultants contracted by CIDA (as appropriate).

Expectations for accountabilities should be broadly identified.

Checklist

 Have the primary roles and key responsibilities for all individuals making a major contribution to the evaluation been adequately identified?

 Are expectations for accountabilities clearly stated?

4 Evaluation Methodology

Credible Methodologies

Shape evaluations to identify results attributable to the investment

The evaluator is to develop a methodology that meets the requirements and expectations for the evaluation (set out in the TORs). The goal is to formulate a strategy that best achieves these objectives given the range of available information, and time/resource limitations.

The challenge lies in determining causal inferences. What results are actually attributable to CIDA's investment? Can external factors be discounted (e.g. economic upturns, other investments)?

A credible evaluation methodology is one that directly ties results to the investment made, thereby eliminating other explanations. This is done though assumption, logical argument and/ or empirical analysis.

The evaluation workplan should:

Explain the reasoning that shaped the evaluation methodology

Describe the performance indicators that will be used to measure progress towards the attainment of results

Identify which information sources are the most relevant and practical for determining evaluation results

Set out a process for information collection, and

Profile techniques for information analysis based on the type of analysis required and the type of information available.

Evaluation designs serve as the logical models to be applied for arriving at conclusions about results. The selection of an evaluation design encompasses determining the type of information to be developed and the type of analysis required.

The way an investment is structured and the availability of sources of information can be important determinants in shaping evaluation designs. Often time and budget constraints dictate what design is feasible. The higher the level of rigor attached to a design, the higher the complexity and, therefore, the resource requirements.

The availability of information is initially identified through research, literature searches, file reviews and/or consultations. However, the workplan should recognize that new sources of information may be discovered during implementation (often during site visits).

The use of interview guides and questionnaires helps ensure that information is collected in a consistent manner. Standardized information collection promotes reliability and validity, and facilitates the aggregation of data elements.

> ### Checklist
>
> Will the logical model for collecting and analyzing information identify results attributable to the investment at output, outcome and impact levels?
>
> Is the methodology aligned with the measurement of performance as set out in the Agency's "Framework of Results and Key Success Factors".

5 Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework establishes the logical basis for responding to the questions that define how the evaluation is to be carried out. It systematizes the evaluator's approach to the evaluation summarizing what is to be measured and how measurement is to carried out in an easy–to–apply matrix format.

The evaluation framework articulates:

Questions to be answered
(and sub–questions)

Performance indicators

Sources of information

Methods of collecting information, and

The basis for making evaluation judgments.

The questions to be answered by the evaluation should link directly to the "Development Results and Success Factors" set out in the "Framework". Information sources are to be selected that effectively inform the measurement of results for each performance indicator.

> ### Checklist
>
> Does the framework establish a logical response to the Agency's expectations for the evaluation?
>
> Does the framework ask questions that are strategically aligned with the factors set out in CIDA's "Framework"?
>
> Does the selection of performance indicators meet criteria for effectiveness, consistency, sensitivity, feasibility and usefulness?

6 Reporting Requirements

The workplan should describe:

A regimen for on–going progress reporting by the evaluator to CIDA's evaluation manager to help ensure evaluations are carried out in accordance with expectations, and within budget. Requirements may range from informal regular briefings to written reports (to meet a prescribed schedule).

Provisions for the immediate reporting of significant problems/unanticipated difficulties to CIDA's evaluation manager (helping to ensure that issues are dealt with).

Plans for on–site briefing and debriefing sessions for CIDA personnel.

An outline or table of contents for the final evaluation report. An evaluation abstract either forms part of the evaluation report or is prepared as a separate document.

Specifications for what is necessary to guide production (translation requirements, printing specifications, hard copy and electronic formats, number of copies).

Checklist

 Are CIDA's expectations for progress reporting, briefing and debriefing sessions and the final report met?

 Does the workplan include an outline/table of contents for the final report?

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7 Work Scheduling

This section should provide a working framework that will help plan, inform and control the evaluation:

The work schedule should identify the individual tasks to be carried out (assigning time frames for their completion) and target dates for milestones and deliverables.

The evaluator may also find it useful to develop a "level of effort" matrix that anticipates the person–days required to complete tasks by team members.

The following figure suggests how workplans could be structured by phase and task/milestone/deliverable.

Phase	Task/Milestone/Deliverable
Evaluation Workplan	Draft workplan CIDA approval process Agreement on final workplan
Information Collection (site visit)	Logistics and on–site familiarization Information collection activities Field debriefing
Information Analysis	Information analysis and interpretation Presentation of findings
Evaluation Report	Strategic assessment Draft evaluation report CIDA approval process Final report

Checklist

- Does the work schedule set out a logical progression of activities through to completion?

- Have timeframes/target dates been established for all key tasks, milestones and deliverables?

THE NEXT STEP

The evaluation workplan should be submitted as a draft to CIDA's evaluation manager for approval. Approvals generally involve an editing process to ensure that CIDA's needs are being met.

CIDA's evaluation manager is to approve the workplan before the evaluation can be operationalized.

As the workplan governs the performance of the evaluation, any major, downstream deviations or alterations to the workplan should be documented, and approved by CIDA management.

PRB's "How to Perform Evaluations" guides serve as information tools for internal application.

They should, in no way, be viewed as defining or modifying CIDA Policy.

We welcome any suggestions to improve our work.

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