



Canadian International
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de
développement international

How to Perform Evaluations - □



Sharing-results

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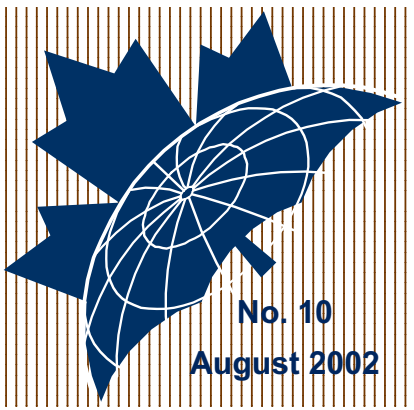
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HOW TO PERFORM EVALUATIONS

SHARING RESULTS

PERFORMANCE REVIEW BRANCH

About this Series...

Evaluations are a key contributor to CIDA's performance measurement and reporting system.

These guides describe the Agency's expectations for delivery to help ensure effective, consistent work practices.

Bringing a Focus to...

- 1 Getting Started
- 2 Model TORs
- 3 Participatory Evaluations
- 4 Gender Equality
- 5 Evaluation Workplans
- 6 Information Collection & Analysis
- 7 Evaluation Reports
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Investing in informed development

Evaluation reports that are relegated to a dusty shelf offer no return on the Agency's investments. How findings, recommendations and lessons learned are ultimately used determines what value is extracted from an evaluation. Optimal value is only realized when what is learned from an evaluation impacts positively on decision-making processes, improving development cooperation practices.

What we take away from evaluations creates an opportunity for:

- ☑ Strengthening programming by identifying shortcomings, and contributing to policies, strategies and methods.
- ☑ Setting out remedial courses of action to address issues and problems.
- ☑ Institutional learning that increases the capacity for achievement.
- ☑ Informing key audiences about how the Agency is performing.

Each of these benefits, however, hinges on what value the evaluation offers, the strategies developed for sharing results, and how the information disseminated is ultimately used.

This Guide looks at the sharing of results from two perspectives. First, it suggests ways for realizing value from the evaluation itself. Then, it explores options for sharing results. In so doing, the reader is focused on how to structure evaluations to make a meaningful and enduring contribution.

This Guide serves as a companion piece to CIDA's Evaluation Guide

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HOW TO BUILD VALUE

Staying committed and focused

How will your evaluation make a contribution? What should be done to ensure you have a useful 'story' to tell? How can CIDA's expectations be met?

Think of the 'Big' Picture

From start to finish, think of your evaluation as both an opportunity and a process:

- An opportunity to contribute to improved development cooperation and the continuous learning process through the sharing of information.
- A process for arriving at findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned that are credible and have value for decision-makers.

From the very outset of planning and design – and throughout the evaluation process – a consistent focus must be maintained on what contribution the evaluation can ultimately make. The potential value of an evaluation is accentuated when the broadest view is adopted to determine what benefits can be derived, employing both long- and short-term perspectives for the sharing of results.

Think about how the sharing of results can contribute to:

- Improving current policies and practices
- Institutional learning objectives
- The validation of hypotheses, and
- The amelioration of issues and problems.

Focus on Results

Above all, the development of meaningful, reliable and useful results should be at the forefront of everyone's mind-set throughout the evaluation process. CIDA needs to be adequately informed to make

Think about the potential for improving development cooperation throughout the evaluation process.

effective decisions. Stakeholders and others in the international development community can benefit from knowing what is being learned. Canadians can see how their tax dollars are being spent.

Will your evaluation:

- Provide a clear understanding program/project performance, the results achieved and any perceived weaknesses
- Identify how CIDA's involvement contributed to those results, and
- Set out valuable lessons learned to promote a wider learning experience?

Stay Flexible

Be ready to learn from the information being collected. During implementation, options may surface for delivering better results. You should be receptive to midstream decision-making that takes advantage of potentially rewarding opportunities.

Keep Messaging Clear and Simple

Information should be framed so it facilitates informed decision-making, is easily understood and reduces the potential for misinterpretation. Experience shows that this is best accomplished when messaging is kept simple.

Performance indicators should not describe every aspect of the program/project, but rather be selected for their significance and value in making a useful contribution. Targeting too much information can be unmanageable, counterproductive and expensive. Not every tidbit of information needs to be collected to know what is going on.

CIDA's "Framework of Results and Key Success Factors" identifies what constitutes achievement in the eyes of the Agency. Your evaluation results should be aligned with the criteria set out.

Sharing results with stakeholders provides an opportunity to reflect on what we are doing and how best we can best achieve mutually desirable results.



REACHING OUT

Making a difference

Sharing results not only creates the potential for improving developmental and operational performance, it can also help build shared meaning and understanding, develop programming support and generate widespread learning opportunities. When results are shared openly, credibility is enhanced and greater pressure is generated for recommendations to be implemented.

Developing a Dissemination Strategy

While guidelines can be helpful, usually the unique features of each evaluation commands a strategy for the sharing of results that is appropriate for the case at hand.

Start by developing answers to questions such as:

- Who are the target audiences?
- What is the key messaging? Who needs to know what?
- How can each target audience best be reached? What should be emphasized?

Once target audiences and their information needs are identified, then information should be packaged to meet CIDA's requirements. The degree to which information is shared with CEAs, recipient governments, local stakeholders, other donors, etc. is usually determined by CIDA's evaluation manager. In some cases, the decision may be taken to distribute summarized information to some audiences.

Participants should not expect that all evaluation recommendations must or should be implemented. CIDA management typically brings a broader understanding of context, constraints, and feasibility limitations to the table. This prerogative, however, should not overshadow the need for taking difficult courses of action when warranted.

The implementation periods for evaluations can often offer valuable opportunities for the sharing and discussing of results with stakeholders and other donors. This holds particularly true during field visits when communications with local stakeholders and recipient government(s) are more readily feasible.

Who Does What

During the the planning/design and implementation stages, the sharing of results is often jointly addressed by both the evaluator and CIDA's assigned project manager. After the evaluation report is finalized, however, the onus generally falls on CIDA to respond to the evaluation and carry out information dissemination.

Typically, the subject responsibility centre is expected to:

- ☑ Review the findings, conclusions and recommendations to identify those that are accepted and supported
- ☑ Set out a management response and assign responsibilities for the actions to be taken, and
- ☑ Implement an information strategy for distributing the evaluation report and any other packaged information developed for key audiences.

In some cases, evaluation results are 'clustered' along thematic lines to provide a broader presentation of performance levels.

Assessing the Options

The sharing of results generally works best when a number of communications techniques are considered. The extent and level of sophistication attached to a dissemination strategy should be a function of the significance of the evaluation – and its potential for making a 'real' contribution both internally and externally.

Oral briefing sessions

In many cases, oral briefings represent the best option for communicating results. They typically bring together people with a shared interest in the evaluation and provide a fertile opportunity for discussion and implementing improvements.

Busy decision-makers are more inclined to attend a briefing session than to sit and read a lengthy report. Attendees should always be provided with a copy of the report or a summarized version.

Be creative. Oral briefings can take the form of work shops or 'brown-bag' lunches.

Evaluations can be shelved if:

CIDA becomes disenfranchised due to inadequate communications with the evaluator.



The methodology was ill-conceived and corrective actions were not taken during the course of the evaluation.



The recommendations are not pragmatic or realistic given financial constraints.



Dramatic changes in context rendered the evaluation irrelevant.



Discord among participants and stakeholders resulted in the minimal 'buy-in' threshold not being obtained.



During the course of the evaluation, ministries of recipient governments should be kept informed about developments and performance levels. At the end of field visits, evaluators should provide oral briefings to Agency field personnel and key local stakeholders.

Corporate Memory System

CIDA's Corporate Memory System, which functions as the Agency's automated development experience database, serves as the primary means for collecting and disseminating evaluation results at the institutional level. This resource is vital to the Agency's capacity to learn and contribute to informed decision-making.

For thematic and other major performance reviews, the full evaluation report is accessible. Evaluation abstracts/executive summaries are to be completed for all evaluations, and entered into this System.

e-Lessons Database

This database documents what CIDA is learning about effective development cooperation through its performance measurement and reporting activities. Lessons learned from evaluations can be searched to access the Agency's knowledge, experiences, and insights.

Other Options for Consideration

- Presentations at Executive Committee, Audit and Evaluation Committee and other senior management meetings
- Bilingual summaries on CIDA's website, and E-mail announcements
- Articles in PRB's *Performance News* and other internal newsletters, bulletins, etc.
- Distribution to country desks, institutional responsibility centres, recipient governments, CEAs, NGOs, other donors, local stakeholders
- Cataloguing in the Agency's International Development Information Centre information holdings and DAC's Evaluation Inventory
- Presentations at seminars, peer review sessions, conferences, etc.
- Press releases and Q & A statements
- References in speeches
- Articles in professional journals

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Build value throughout the evaluation process to arrive at an informative, useful 'story' that makes an effective contribution to development cooperation.



Share information throughout the life of the evaluation so that CIDA management stays informed and stakeholders are encouraged to 'buy into' the results.



Frame information to facilitate informed decision-making and understanding – and reduce misinterpretation.



Engage stakeholders to build shared meaning and understanding, encourage participatory activities, promote learning, and develop programming support.



Develop a strategy for sharing results that optimizes the benefits to be derived from the evaluation, and meets the information needs of key audiences while respecting the Agency's agenda and context for development.



Carefully consider all opportunities for communicating results and be creative in devising a strategy that enhances the potential for making a 'real' contribution both within CIDA and externally.



These guides are designed to promote learning.
They should, in no way, be viewed as defining and/or modifying CIDA Policy.

We welcome any suggestions to improve our work.

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...thank you