

Checklist for Defining Evaluation Questions

This checklist is designed to assist USAID program managers in developing a list of evaluation questions and refining them for a given evaluation. This instrument is intended to supplement Module 5 of the Evaluation for Program Managers course, and should be used in the design stage of an evaluation. It is important to note that the development of evaluation questions should be an iterative and collaborative process.

1. Sources of Questions

When developing a list of evaluation questions, there are a number of available sources from which to draw from – including those listed below.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluation questions specified in program documents including PMPs and evaluation plans
<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluation purpose according to USAID EP and ADS triggers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluation users' questions and concerns about the program
<input type="checkbox"/>	Questions and concerns about the program from other evaluation stakeholders
<input type="checkbox"/>	Findings from earlier evaluations of <i>this</i> intervention
<input type="checkbox"/>	Findings from earlier evaluations of <i>similar</i> interventions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assumptions and contextual factors identified in the theory of change/logic model
<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional standards, checklists, criteria
<input type="checkbox"/>	Experts' views
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your own knowledge and experience

2. Prioritization

Evaluations cannot aim to answer all possible questions, especially given time and resource restraints. As such, prioritizing questions is crucial. The below list includes questions you should ask yourself to determine which questions are most important to incorporate into the evaluation.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Who would use the information? Who would be upset if the evaluation question were dropped? What's the level of interest to key stakeholders?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Would the information change or impact the course of events?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it of passing interest, or does it focus on a critical or major issue?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Would the evaluation be compromised if this question were dropped?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it feasible to answer the question?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Can the evaluation users envision how they would actually use the evidence in response to each question? Can they specify decision-

	making scenarios for the response to each question?
<input type="checkbox"/>	The personal factor--do the key users <i>really care</i> about the evaluation questions and are they <i>really committed</i> to having them answered?

3. Tips for Writing Good Evaluation Questions

Evaluation questions form the basis of the statement of work and evaluation in general. As such, well-written questions are essential to ensure a successful evaluation. When looking at your questions, be sure they:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Each link to the evaluation purpose
<input type="checkbox"/>	Avoid asking two questions in one
<input type="checkbox"/>	Avoid yes/no questions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have <u>a small number of key questions</u> and specific issues (ADS 206.3.6.2)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Include relevant sub-questions, when applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are feasible to answer given the stage of the program/policy cycle
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are answerable with empirical evidence (ADS 206.3.6.2)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take into account gender considerations per the program gender analysis (ADS 203.3.6.1 and ADS 201.3.9.3)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Designate each question as descriptive, normative or cause-and-effect
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure questions are realistic given the time and budget constraints for the evaluation