EVALUATION PLAN

Initiation

Evaluation plan

Evaluation is a critical component of any project. If you don't plan to evaluate your project you will not know how successful or unsuccessful it has been.

Initiation

The purpose of this phase is to develop a clear understanding of what your project is, what you want to achieve and how you plan to get there.

Key points

1. Evaluate at the right time

Evaluation should be undertaken in a timely manner. It should start when a solution design is near completion and before implementation, so baseline data can be collected as a comparator for further analysis. Evaluation should be used to test if the implementation plan is resulting in change at key points, and not completed too early before measurable results are produced, especially if they are informing future funding decisions.

2. Establish an evaluation team

Expertise and independence is required for evaluation, so the evaluation team should include key stakeholders and at least one independent person who has evaluation expertise. The role of the team is to undertake the evaluation or guide external evaluators, and report back to the steering committee, keeping them informed of progress, risks and results. Stakeholders are vital to the interpretation of evaluation information and in making recommendations.

3. Plan the evaluation

Planning is done by the evaluation team and includes identification of activities, outcomes and expected impacts and the key times to evaluate during the implementation. The evaluation team will also develop a communications plan outlining stakeholder engagement and a plan for dissemination of results. The evaluation design outlines the overall methodology and evaluation tools that will be used throughout the evaluation.

4 Design and plan

The evaluation design involves defining the specific questions that will examine the project objectives and benefits. The data plan includes a list of data that will be collected, the definition of the data, where and when they are obtained, by whom, and their storage and usage. Training and testing may be required to ensure there is satisfactory reliability if more than one person is collecting the same data type.

Considerations and tips

Too often evaluation is left off the project plan and not done. An effective evaluation provides a platform for spread and learning, which are valuable assets to help organisations improve.

Be vigilant with scope

The evaluation plan needs to be realistically scoped to ensure the critical evaluation questions are answered. Consider the time and funds available for the evaluation and don't get side tracked collecting data that does not relate directly to the evaluation objectives.

Context

It is important to consider the context of the project when designing the evaluation. What is considered achievable at one site may be different to another. It is also important to use appropriate methods of data collection and source data that are both valid and reliable.

Key stakeholders

It is important that stakeholders are involved in evaluations from the beginning and throughout the process. This will ensure that what is measured is identified in a collaborative way. The involvement of stakeholders contributes to capturing diverse perspectives and increasing the quality and depth of the evaluation.

Ethical considerations

Evaluations should be conducted in an ethical manner. Evaluations may require access to personal data, patient interviews and information from vulnerable populations. Observe policies relating to the gathering, storage and use of information, engagement with patients/clients and adherence to standards.

ACI Evaluation cycle

Evaluation design	Data plan	Implementation	Communicating results	Incorporating findings
Questions, define evaluation type (formative, impact, etc), deliverables	Indicators and measures, instruments, data sources	Develop and test instruments, data collection, analysis	Reporting, dissemination of results to all participants, publish	Redesign, expansion, discontinue

Further information

My Health Learning Log in Form – Redesign Initiation (202465121): Introduction to sustainability and Evaluation

NSW Government Program Evaluation Guidelines – https://arp.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/NSW%20Government%20Program%20Evaluation%20Guideline%20January%202016_1.pdf

Evaluation toolkit, NSW government – www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/tools-and-resources/evaluation-toolkit/

Next Steps

Undertaking the evaluation involves the development of tools, data collection, and analysis and interpretation of results. When possible, it is suggested that tools are tested on a sample of similar participants to identify and revise any potential issues before going live.

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