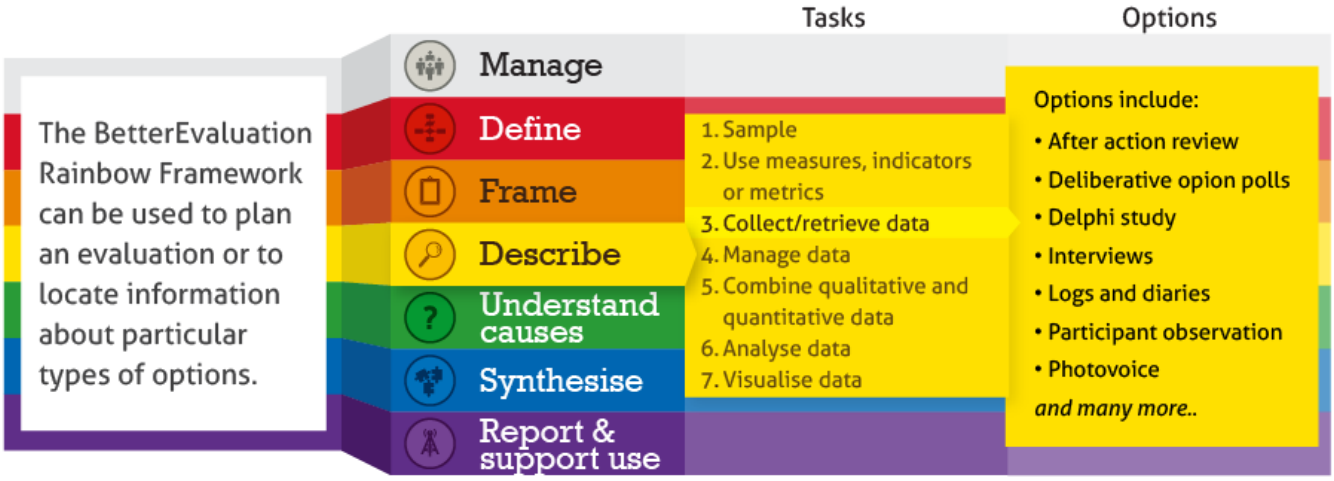
Rainbow Framework

There are so many different options (methods, strategies and processes) in evaluation that it can be hard to work out which ones to choose for an evaluation.

BetterEvaluation organises options into 34 different evaluation tasks, grouped by 7 colour-coded clusters to make it easier for you to choose and use appropriate methods, strategies or processes. It also shows approaches (which combine a package of options) such as Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) and Outcome Mapping (OM).

The planning tool can be used to: commission and manage an evaluation; plan an evaluation; check the quality of an ongoing evaluation; embed participation thoughtfully in evaluation; develop evaluation capacity.

Send suggestions for additions or revisions to us via http://betterevaluation.org



BetterEvaluation is an international collaboration to improve evaluation theory and practice by sharing information about evaluation options (methods, strategies, processes) and approaches (collections of methods). We provide an interactive and freely accessibly website and related events and resources. Visit BetterEvaluation at http://betterevaluation.org and register to contribute material, add comments and ask questions. We support individual evaluators, managers of evaluation and practitioners as well as organisations across disciplinary and organisational boundaries, sectors, languages and countries.

Founding partners: Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) initiative of the Consultative Group on International Agriculture (CGIAR), Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Pact, RMIT University (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology).

Financial support: Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), The Rockefeller Foundation, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

1. MANAGE an evaluation or evaluation system

Manage an evaluation (or a series of evaluations), including deciding who will conduct the evaluation and who will make decisions about it.

Understand and engage stakeholders

Who needs to be involved in the evaluation? How can they be identified and engaged?

Understand stakeholders:

1. Community scoping
2. Stakeholder mapping and analysis

Engage stakeholders:

3. Community fairs
4. Fishbowl technique
5. Formal meeting processes
6. Informal meeting processes

Establish decision making processes

Who will have the authority to make what type of decisions about the evaluation?
Who will provide advice or make recommendations about the evaluation?
What processes will be used for making decisions?

Types of structures:

1. Advisory group
2. Citizen juries
3. Steering group

Ways of making decisions:

8. Consensus decision making
9. Hierarchical decision making
10. Majority decision making

Ways of exploring issues:

4. Formal meeting processes
5. Informal meeting processes
6. Round robin
7. Six Hats Thinking for exploring decision making

Approaches:

- Participatory evaluation

Decide who will conduct the evaluation

Who will actually undertake the evaluation?

1. Community
2. Expert review
3. External consultant
4. Hybrid - internal and external
5. Internal staff
6. Learning alliances
7. Peer review

Approaches:

- Horizontal evaluation
- Positive deviance
- Participatory evaluation

Determine and secure resources

What resources (time, money, and expertise) will be needed for the evaluation and how can they be obtained? Consider both internal (e.g. staff time) and external (e.g. previous participants' time) resources

Determine resources needed

1. Evaluation budget matrix
2. Evaluation costing
3. Resources stocktake

Secure resources needed

4. Designated staff time
5. Grant funding
6. Institutionalised budget allocation
7. Leveraging partnerships
8. Strategies to reduce costs

Define ethical and quality evaluation standards

What will be considered a high quality and ethical evaluation?
How should ethical issues be addressed?

1. Cultural competency
2. Ethical guidelines
3. Evaluation Standards
4. Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Document management processes and agreements

How will the evaluation's management processes and agreements be documented?

Document what is needed in an evaluation:

1. Expression of Interest (EoI)
2. Request For Proposal (RFP)
3. Scope of Work (SoW)
4. Terms Of Reference (ToR)

Document how different organisations will work together:

5. Contractual agreement
6. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

Develop planning documents for the evaluation

What needs to be done to design, plan and document the evaluation?
What planning documents need to be created?

1. Aide memoire
2. Evaluation framework
3. Evaluation plan
4. Evaluation work plan
5. Gantt chart
6. Inception report

Review evaluation (do meta-evaluation)

How will the evaluation itself be evaluated – including the plan, the process and report?

1. Beneficiary exchange
2. Expert review for meta-evaluation
3. Group critical reflection
4. Individual critical reflection
5. Peer review for meta-evaluation

Develop evaluation capacity

How can the ability of individuals, groups and organisations to conduct and use evaluations be strengthened?

1. Community of practice
2. Conferences
3. Coaching
4. Evaluation competencies
5. Evaluation library
6. Evaluation policy
7. Evaluation societies and associations
8. Learning circle
9. Mentoring
10. Organisational policies and procedures
11. Peer coaching
12. Peer review for meta-evaluation
13. Reflective practice
14. Supervised practice in teams
15. Training and formal education

2. DEFINE what is to be evaluated

Develop a description (or access an existing version) of what is to be evaluated and how it is understood to work.

Develop initial description

What exactly is being evaluated?

1. Existing project description
2. Peak experience description
3. Thumbnail description

Approaches

- Appreciative inquiry

Develop programme theory / logic model

How is the intervention understood to work (programme theory, theory of change, logic model)?

Ways of developing logic models:

1. Articulating mental models
2. Backcasting
3. Five whys
4. Group model building
5. Previous research and evaluation
6. SWOT analysis

Ways of representing logic models:

7. Tiny Tools Results Chain
8. Logframe
9. Outcomes hierarchy
10. Realist matrix
11. Results chain

Approaches

- Collaborative outcomes reporting
- Outcome mapping
- Participatory impact pathways approach
- Realist evaluation

Identify potential unintended results

What are possible unintended results (both positive and negative) that will be important to address in the evaluation?

1. Key informant interviews
2. Negative programme theory
3. Risk assessment
4. Six Hats Thinking about unintended results
5. Unusual events reporting

3. FRAME the boundaries of an evaluation

Set the parameters of the evaluation –its purposes, key evaluation questions and the criteria and standards to be used.

Identify primary intended users

Who are the primary intended users of this evaluation?

(This task has resources only)

Decide purpose

What are the primary purposes and intended uses of the evaluation?

Using findings:

1. Contribute to broader evidence base
2. Inform decision making aimed at improvement (formative)
3. Inform decision making aimed at selection, continuation or termination (summative)
4. Lobby and advocate

Using process:

5. Build trust and legitimacy across stakeholders
6. Ensure accountability
7. Ensure diverse perspectives are included, especially those with little voice

Specify the key evaluation questions

What are the high level questions the evaluation will seek to answer? How can these be developed?

(This task has resources only)

Determine what 'success' looks like

What should be the criteria and standards for judging performance?
Whose criteria and standards matter? What process should be used to develop agreement about these?

Formal statements of values:

1. Sustainable development goals
2. OECD-DAC Criteria
3. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
4. Standards, evaluative criteria and benchmarks
5. Stated goals and objectives

Articulate and document tacit values:

6. Hierarchical card sorting
7. Open space technology
8. Photovoice
9. Rich pictures
10. Stories of change
11. Values clarification interviews
12. Values clarification public opinion questionnaires

Negotiate between different values:

13. Concept mapping
14. Delphi study
15. Dotmocracy
16. Open space technology
17. Public consultations

Approaches

- Critical system heuristics
- Participatory evaluation

4. DESCRIBE activities, outcomes, impacts and context

Collect and retrieve data to answer descriptive questions about the activities of the project/programme/policy, the various results it has had, and the context in which it has been implemented.

Sample

What sampling strategies will you use for collecting data?

Probability:

1. Multi-stage
2. Sequential
3. Simple random
4. Stratified random

Convenience:

5. Convenience
6. Volunteer

Purposive (or Purposeful):

7. Confirming and disconfirming
8. Criterion
9. Critical case
10. Homogenous
11. Intensity
12. Maximum variation
13. Outlier
14. Snowball
15. Theory-based
16. Typical case

Use measures, indicators or metrics

What measures or indicators will be used?
Are there existing ones that should be used or will you need to develop new measures and indicators?

(This task has resources only)

Collect and/ or retrieve data

How will you collect and/or retrieve data about activities, results, context and other factors?

Information from individuals:

1. Deliberative opinion polls
2. Diaries
3. Goal attainment scales
4. Interviews with individuals:
   - Convergent
   - In-depth
   - Key informant
5. Hierarchical card sorting
6. Keypad technology
7. Questionnaires (or surveys):
   - Email
   - Face-to-face
   - Internet
   - Mail
   - Mobile phone (see Mobile Data Collection)
   - Telephone
8. Mobile data collection
9. Photolanguage

Information from groups:

17. After action review
18. Brainstorming
19. Card visualization
20. Concept mapping
21. Delphi study
22. Dotmocracy
23. Fishbowl technique
24. Interviews with groups
    - Focus groups discussion
25. Future search conference
26. Mural
27. ORID (Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional)
28. Q-methodology
29. SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)
30. World cafe
31. Writeshop

10. Photovoice
11. Polling Booth
12. Postcards
13. Projective techniques
14. Seasonal calendars
15. Sketch mapping
16. Stories

Observation:

32. Field trips
33. Non-participant observation
34. Participant observation
35. Photography/video recording
36. Transect

Physical:

37. *Biophysical*
38. *Geographical*

Existing documents and data:

39. *Big data*
40. *Logs and diaries*
41. *Official statistics*
42. *Previous evaluations and research*
43. *Project records*
44. *Reputational monitoring dashboard*

Manage Data

How will you organise and store data and ensure its quality?

1. Consistent data collection and recording
2. Data backup
3. Data cleaning
4. Effective data transfer
5. Secure data storage
6. Archive data for future use

Combine qualitative and quantitative data

How will you combine qualitative and quantitative data?

When data are gathered:

1. Parallel data gathering
2. Sequential data gathering

When data are combined:

3. Component design
4. Integrated design

Purpose of combining data:

5. Enriching
6. Examining
7. Explaining
8. Triangulation (confirming; rejecting)

Analyse data

How will you investigate patterns in numeric or textual data?

Numeric analysis:

1. Correlation
2. Cross-tabulations
3. Data mining
4. Exploratory techniques
5. Frequency tables
6. Measures of central tendency
7. Measures of dispersion
8. Multivariate descriptive
9. Non-parametric inferential
10. Parametric inferential
11. Summary statistics
12. Time series analysis

Textual analysis

13. Content analysis
14. Framework matrices
15. Thematic coding
16. Timeline and time-ordered matrices

Visualise data

How will you display data visually?

See relationships among data points:

1. Scatterplot
2. Matrix chart
3. Network diagram

Compare a set of values:

4. Bar chart
5. Block histogram
6. Bubble chart

Track rises and falls over time:

7. Line graph
8. Stacked graph

See the parts of a whole:

9. Icon array
10. Pie chart
11. Treemap

Analyse text:

12. Phrase net
13. Word cloud
14. Word tree

See the world:

15. Demographic mapping
16. Geotagging
17. GIS mapping
18. Interactive mapping
19. Social mapping

5. UNDERSTAND CAUSES of outcomes and impacts

Collect and analyse data to answer causal questions about what has produced outcomes and impacts that have been observed.

Check the results support causal attribution

How will you assess whether the results are consistent with the theory that the intervention produced them?

Gathering additional data:

1. Key informants attribution
2. Modus operandi
3. Process tracing

Analysis:

4. Check dose-response patterns
5. Check intermediate outcomes
6. Check results match a statistical model
7. Check results match expert predictions
8. Check timing of outcomes
9. Comparative case studies
10. Qualitative comparative analysis
11. Realist analysis of testable hypotheses

Approaches:

- Contribution analysis
- Collaborative outcomes reporting
- Multiple lines and levels of evidence
- Rapid outcomes assessment

Compare results to the counterfactual

How will you compare the factual with the counterfactual –what would have happened without the intervention?

Experimental:

1. Control group

Quasi-experimental:

2. Difference-in-difference
3. Instrumental variables
4. Judgemental matching
5. Matched comparisons
6. Propensity scores
7. Regression discontinuity
8. Sequential allocation
9. Statistically created counterfactual

Non-experimental:

10. Key informant
11. Logically constructed counterfactual

Approaches:

- Randomised Controlled Trials

Investigate possible alternative explanations

How will you investigate alternative explanations?

1. Key informant
2. Force field analysis
3. General elimination methodology
4. Process tracing
5. Rapid outcomes assessment
6. Ruling out technical explanations
7. Searching for disconfirming evidence/Following up exceptions
8. Statistically control for extraneous variables

Approaches:

- Contribution analysis
- Collaborative outcomes reporting
- Multiple lines and levels of evidence
- Rapid outcomes assessment

6. SYNTHESISE data from one or more evaluations

Combine data to form an overall assessment of the merit or worth of the intervention, or to summarise evidence across several evaluations.

Synthesise data from a single evaluation

How will you synthesise data from a single evaluation?

Processes:

1. Consensus conference
2. Expert panel

Techniques:

3. Cost benefit analysis
4. Cost effectiveness analysis
5. Cost utility analysis
6. Lessons learnt
7. Multi-criteria analysis
8. Numeric weighting
9. Qualitative weight and sum
10. Rubrics
11. Value for money

Approaches:

- Social return on investment

Synthesise data across evaluations

Do you need to synthesise data across evaluations? If so, how should this be done?

1. Best evidence synthesis
2. Lessons learnt
3. Meta-analysis
4. Meta-ethnography
5. Rapid evidence assessment
6. Realist synthesis
7. Systematic review
8. Textual narrative synthesis
9. Vote counting

Generalise findings

How can the findings from this evaluation be generalised to the future, to other sites and to other programmes?

1. Analytic generalisation
2. Statistical generalisation

Approaches:

- Positive deviance
- Horizontal evaluation

7. REPORT AND SUPPORT USE of findings

Develop and present findings in ways that are useful for the intended users of the evaluation, and support them to make use of them.

Identify reporting requirements

What timeframe and format is required for reporting?

1. Communication plan
2. Reporting needs analysis

Develop reporting media

What types of reporting formats will be appropriate for the intended users?

Written:

1. Aide memoire
2. Executive summaries
3. Final reports
4. Interim reports
5. Memos and Email
6. News media communications
7. Newsletters, bulletins, briefs and brochures
8. Postcards
9. Website communications

Presentation events:

10. Conference
11. Feedback workshops
12. Teleconference
13. Verbal briefings
14. Videoconference
15. Web-conference

Presentation materials:

16. Flip charts
17. Displays and exhibits
18. Posters
19. Power-point
20. Video

Creative:

21. Cartoons
22. Photographic reporting
23. Poetry
24. Reporting in pictures
25. Theatre

Graphic Design:

25. Arrangement
26. Color
27. Images
28. Type

Ensure accessibility

How can the report be easy to access and use for different users?

General accessibility:

1. Applied graphic design principles
2. Descriptive chart titles
3. Eliminate chartjunk
4. Emphasis techniques
5. Headings as summary statements
6. One-Three-Twenty-Five (1:3:25) principle
7. Plain language

Specific accessibility barriers:

8. Colour blind audience
9. Low vision and blind audience

Develop recommendations

Will the evaluation include recommendations?
How will these be developed and by whom?

1. Beneficiary exchange
2. Chat rooms
3. Electronic democracy
4. External review
5. Group critical reflection
6. Individual critical reflection
7. Participatory recommendation screening
8. World cafe

Support use

In addition to engaging intended users in the evaluation process, how will you support the use of evaluation findings?

1. Annual reviews
2. Conference co-presentations
3. Data use calendar
4. Policy briefings
5. Recommendations tracking
6. Social learning

Approaches

Appreciative Inquiry
A participatory approach that focuses on existing strengths rather than deficiencies - evaluation users identify instances of good practice and ways of increasing their frequency.

Beneficiary Assessment
An approach that assesses the value of an intervention as perceived by the (intended) beneficiaries, thereby aiming to give voice to their priorities and concerns.

Case study
A research design that focuses on understanding a unit (person, site or project) in its context, which can use a combination of qualitative and quantitative data.

Collaborative Outcomes Reporting
An approach that builds on contribution analysis, adding expert review and community review of the assembled evidence and conclusions.

Contribution Analysis
An approach for assessing the evidence for claims that an intervention has contributed to observed outcomes and impacts.

Critical System Heuristics
An approach used to surface, elaborate, and critically consider boundary judgments, that is, the ways in which people/groups decide what is relevant to the system of interest (any situation of concern).

Developmental Evaluation
An approach appropriate for evaluations of adaptive and emergent interventions, such as social change initiatives or projects operating in complex and uncertain environments.

Horizontal Evaluation
An approach that combines self-assessment by local participants and external review by peers.

Innovation History
A way to jointly develop an agreed narrative of how an innovation was developed, including key contributors and processes, to inform future innovation efforts.

Institutional Histories
An approach for creating a narrative that records key points about how institutional arrangements have evolved over time and have created and contributed to more effective ways to achieve project or programme goals.

Most Significant Change
Collects and analyses personal accounts of change, includes processes for learning about what changes are most valued by individuals and groups.

Outcome Mapping
Unpacks an initiative's theory of change, provides a framework to collect data on immediate, basic changes that lead to longer, more transformative change, and allows for the plausible assessment of the initiative's contribution to results via 'boundary partners'.

Participatory Evaluation
A range of approaches that engage stakeholders (especially intended beneficiaries) in planning, conducting, analysing the evaluation and/or making decisions about the evaluation.

Participatory Impact Pathways Analysis

Participatory Learning for Action
Formerly known as Participatory Rural appraisal. Enables farmers to analyse their own situation and develop a common perspective on natural resource management and agriculture at village level.

Positive Deviance
Involves intended evaluation users in identifying 'outliers' – those with exceptionally good outcomes – and understanding how they have achieved these.

Randomised Controlled Trials
An approach that produces an estimate of the mean net impact of an intervention by comparing results between a randomly assigned control group and experimental group or groups.

Realist Evaluation
A form of theory-driven evaluation that seeks to understand what works for whom, where and why taking into account how context makes a difference to programme results.

Social Return on Investment
Identifies a broad range of social outcomes, not only the direct outcomes for the intended beneficiaries of an intervention.

Utilisation-Focused Evaluation
Uses the intended uses of the evaluation by its primary intended users to guide decisions about how an evaluation should be conducted.