

Group evaluation

There is need to assess the degree to which a group is achieving or has achieved its set goals. The process of assessing this constitutes evaluation. The group need to assess itself in-order to be as productive as possible. Evaluation can be useful, exciting and an important knowledge development tool. A good evaluation provides a useful tool for managing on-going activities within the group, identify successes and weaknesses in group activities and help make effective planning for the development of new initiatives.

Evaluation does not only happen at the end of the project, but rather it begins when the project starts through the formulation of goals and objectives and continues throughout the life of the project. Evaluation allows us to know if we are meeting our set goals and having the desired impact. Evaluation could be carried out by an individual or a number of people. In small projects with limited resources, evaluation could be done by project sponsor, while larger projects could entails hiring of outside evaluator. Roles and responsibilities should be clarified.

Importance of evaluation

1. It helps to identify group's strength and weaknesses
2. it indicates changes for future which will increase group productivity and maturity.
3. it allows group leadership to concentrate on the importance of their groups
4. it helps to compare the actual work with the ideal in group situation so as to know when and where to modify the line of action.

What can be evaluated in group situation?

1. The group and the dynamics (internal and external dynamics)
 - i. atmosphere or climate of the group
 - ii. communication pattern
 - iii. involvement or participation pattern of the group
 - iv. level of performance as compared to standard
 - v. degree of social conformity: social control, values
 - vi. degree of identification of members
 - vii. general role definition of members and sub groups
 - viii. specific roles performed by members
 - ix. individual human relation skill
 - x. quality resolution of individual differences
 - xi. group size
 - xii. use made of evaluation
 - xiii. conformity of community values and goals
 - xiv. status of a group as related to others
 - xv. community expectations and group goals
 - xvi. identification with institutional values
2. Goals and objectives
 - i. effectiveness of goal consideration
 - ii. degree of consensus in objective formulation
 - iii. understanding and acceptance of goals
 - iv. clarity of statement of objectives
 - v. the dynamic qualities of group goals
 - vi. the achievability of goal with community value

- vii. the developmental aspect of goal
 - viii. co-operative determinants of goals
 - ix. the compatibility of goal with community values
 - x. evaluating potential of goals
3. Techniques
- i. appropriateness in relations to members abilities and skills
 - ii. appropriateness in relation to internal dynamics
 - iii. appropriateness in relations to external dynamics
 - iv. compatibility with stated objectives
 - v. creativity as expressed by adoption and invention

5 Key evaluation questions:

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| What?. | 1. | Did we do what we said we should do? |
| Why? | 2. | What did we learn about what worked and what did'nt work? |
| So what? | 3. | what difference did it make that we did this work? |
| Now what? | 4. | what could we do differently? |
| Then what? | 5. | how do we plan to use evaluation findings for continuous learning? |

The five evaluation process step

1. Define the project work: having a clear, measurable project goal and objective.
Project activity type could be:
 - need assessments
 - education and awareness
 - resources development
 - skills development
 - developing innovative models etc
2. Develop success indicators and their measures: define what constitute success of project. This allows us to know whether project objective has been achieved or not. How do we identify the success indicators? Ideas
3. Collect the evaluation data: after the above mentioned steps decide (a) what information the project needs to collect (b) who has the information (c) how the information will be collected.

Data could be collected through:

- written questionnaire
- telephone survey
- reaction sheet
- interview – face to face or phone
- focus group
- participant observation
- project diary
- program records
- before and after questionnaire
- non-traditional method of documentation

4. Analyse and interpret the data. There could be a need to make a summary of data collected, it should be analysed and key learning identified. This would help prepare the final report. Recommendations are often made and action plan stipulated.
5. Use the evaluation results: this could be used throughout the project to improve planning and implementations of activities. It is advisable to share the result with others as it adds to the body of knowledge.

Organizing a project evaluation involves:

- Putting together an evaluation team
- Developing an evaluation plan
- Putting in place a management structure and process so that evaluation runs smoothly

Factors to consider include:

- Degree of interdependence or “objectivity” required: This means whom the evaluation is for and its purpose.
- Time, cost and logistics
- Expertise: will the project team be able make effective use of the data gathering, analysis and reporting technique.

Establishing policies, procedures and structures

These are fundamentals before the actual planning of the evaluation

- Who will manage the evaluation – project leader/manager, steering group?
- Who will be part of the evaluation team
- Who else will play a role in planning and actual evaluation of project
- Who will scope the parameters and overall approach of evaluation? How will this be determined?
- Who will carry out the evaluation and when?
- What will be the general reporting requirement?
- Who will own and control the evaluation data and findings?
- Who will oversee the quality of the evaluation?
- What guidelines should be followed?
- How will recommended improvements stemming from the findings be facilitated?

How to carry out an evaluation peer group discussion

A focus group discussion (FGD) is an exploratory research tool. You administer this tool on representative of the target audience you want to communicate with. FGDs provide qualitative information on your research interest, thereby exploring knowledge, beliefs, concerns and attitude rather than giving statistical facts

Stages in FGDs

1. clarify your objectives: what do you want to learn from the focus group and what missing information and problem issues do you hope to address. Provide a framework for your agenda which will assist in getting useful

information. All stakeholders should be involved in the definition of objective

2. Selecting participants: Best size of FGDs is 6 to 12 persons. This is advisable for easy management. Participants at FGDs should have similar background for comfortability and maximum participation.
3. Making practical arrangements: all participants need to be informed of the date, time and place of the meeting. Adequate transportation could be provided. Choose a person with good verbal communication skill as a facilitator for the group. He should be versatile and lead the conversation in a subtle manner.
4. Preparing for the discussion: agenda preparation is essential as it acts as reminder of the main issues of discussion. Be selective with type of questions asked. Open ended questions could be more desirable. Avoid leading questions. Recording of the discussion is essential (tape, video, taking of minutes). Refreshments could also be provided for the participants.
5. Manage the discussion: introduce your self and explain purpose of FGD. Tell them their contributions will be valued and that you are interested in their opinions and not the right answers. Have rules to involve all participants, ask general questions to start with, summarise discussion at the end of the session. Listen attentively to your audience.
6. Using the information: analyse discussion and summarize all information provided under the objectives defined at the beginning of the evaluation. Share findings with stake holders