

Checklist for Choosing an Internal Evaluation or External Evaluator

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Will you evaluate your project in-house or work with an external evaluator? Whether you are seeking to identify effective ways to design a new project (“formative evaluation”), demonstrate what your activities accomplished (“summative evaluation”), or both, this checklist will help you decide.

Time

- Does your prospective team member have time to ensure high quality and on-schedule completion of all evaluation tasks, in addition to all of his or her normal tasks?

Evaluation Expertise

- Does your team member have a degree or training in evaluation and applied research?
- Does your team member know best practices for collecting data such as surveys, interviews, and research studies to maximize validity and usefulness of the results?
- Is your team member active in the evaluation professional community and committed to professional standards for evaluators?
- Is your team member familiar with the latest advancements in evaluation methods and how to create an evaluation strategy that fits your unique situation, data, and questions?
- If your evaluation involves statistical data, can your team member determine appropriate analytical methods, explain assumptions/limitations, and check for and mitigate limitations (e.g., missing data, response bias, attrition)?
- If your evaluation involves qualitative data like narrative comments and texts, does your team know how to systematically make sense of and integrate large amounts of data—including any surprising results?

Fit

- Does your team member have a proven track record in evaluating projects of similar scope, strategies, and information needs as your program?

Cost and Value

- Would conducting your own evaluation be the best use of your staff's time?
- You are NOT evaluating a grant funded project that includes a budget for evaluation or requires an external evaluation?
- An external evaluation WILL NOT help us boost our credibility, enhance prospects for future funding, and expand to help more people?

If you checked all of the items, chances are you are well-positioned to conduct an internal evaluation. However, if you have even one item unchecked, it may be in the best interest of your organization to collaborate with an outside evaluator to help you with your evaluation. Your content expertise, mixed with an external evaluator's methodological expertise, will increase your opportunity for success.

Want more information on how to start this process with no strings attached? Give us a call, because we are here to help.

If you have any questions or would like assistance, contact us at:
info@meaningfulevidence.com. Your success is our goal!



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