

CORE GUIDE / 06

Evaluation, Learning & Adaptation

Ask stronger evaluative questions and turn findings into programme improvement.

START WITH A DECISION, NOT A FORM.

Ask what decision the evidence should inform before deciding what to measure.

The essential idea

Evaluation is a systematic assessment of a programme's design, implementation, results, value or contribution. Learning is the disciplined practice of using evidence to improve decisions and action.

WHY IT MATTERS

Good evaluation questions focus the inquiry on decisions that matter.

Frame evaluation questions

Good evaluation questions focus the inquiry on decisions that matter.

- **Relevance:** Is the programme addressing a meaningful need?
- **Coherence:** Does the design fit the wider system and other efforts?
- **Effectiveness:** What results are emerging and for whom?
- **Efficiency:** Are resources used responsibly?
- **Sustainability:** What is likely to continue after support?

Close the learning loop

A learning loop turns evidence into a documented decision, owner, timeframe and follow-up check.

- Share findings in an accessible form.
- Discuss what is surprising or uncertain.
- Agree actions and named owners.
- Review whether actions happened and what changed.

Worked field example

An NGO is deciding whether to expand a pilot mentoring model to new districts.

Programme question	Evidence to use	Decision it can support
What evidence is sufficient to decide whether the model is relevant, feasible and showing credible early results?	Implementation fidelity, participant experience, outcome indicators, cost profile and contextual constraints.	Scale, adapt, test further or stop based on a balanced evidence review.

Try it in your work

- Draft three evaluation questions using relevance, effectiveness and learning.
- Schedule a 60-minute evidence review before the next planning cycle.
- Create a learning-action log with owners and due dates.

<p>Common mistakes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treating a final report as the end of evaluation. • Collecting evidence without a decision audience. • Listing recommendations without ownership or follow-up. 	<p>A stronger habit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring decision-makers into question design early. • Share interim findings while they can still influence action. • Record adaptations and the evidence behind them.
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REFLECT	What could your team stop collecting because it does not currently support a decision, accountability requirement or learning conversation?
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