



Research Note

November 2018

A GUIDE TO EVALUATION RESOURCES

[Click on links for further information](#)

The following evaluation resources were published in August 2018:

1. [Summary of 48 guides](#)

Each summary of 48 guides reviewed by evaluation topic experts includes:

- What guide covers
- What it is useful for
- Any advantages/disadvantages of using the guide
- Specific evaluation themes each guide support

2. [Evaluation in health & wellbeing: overview](#)

A guide to evaluation and the different types and methods available. Includes:

- **Introduction**

This guidance aims to help public health practitioners when conducting evaluations. This section provides an overview of what evaluation is, when it should be undertaken, and different types of evaluation. There is also a glossary defining the important terms and a guide to other resources.

- **Evaluability**

In some instances, it is not possible or appropriate to perform an evaluation. It is important to recognise these instances so that limited resources can be saved and used elsewhere.

Evaluability assessment involves assessing the extent to which an intervention can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion.

Evaluability can be considered in 3 complementary ways:

- in principle
- in practice
- in relation to utility

The first relates to the nature of the intervention design (for example, is the theory of change supported or plausible in this intervention) and focuses on whether it is possible to evaluate the intervention as has been described or implemented.

The second considers the availability of relevant data and systems needed to make that data available. A variety of more or less costly methods may be needed to collect reliable evaluation data. So evaluability depends on access to that data and the practicality and cost of collecting it.

The third aspect of evaluability is the potential usefulness of the evaluation. This is likely to involve the perspectives of relevant stakeholders and users.

- **Planning and evaluation**

Successful evaluation can only be achieved with careful planning. You should think through each stage of evaluation and consider:

- what is the aim of the evaluation
- who needs to be involved (this will include individuals who deliver or benefit from the service/intervention being evaluated, as well as the evaluation team and potential users of the evaluation findings)
- what resources and skills are needed
- what are the likely timescales
- how will any findings be used to the service, and intervention or policy suggested by the evaluation, be communicated and made

Planning can identify problems that might arise. So these can be addressed before evaluation begins. In some cases, planning assessment may conclude that the evaluability is poor if, for example, there are not enough resources or difficulties with obtaining data. Planning does not stop when the evaluation begins but is an ongoing process.

- **Outcome evaluation**

An outcome evaluation can tell us how effective an intervention is by asking 'Did it work?' and 'How well did it work?' These studies investigate whether changes in outcomes occurred as a result of the intervention.

- **Evaluation methods**

A wide variety of research methods and data collection tools are available for use in evaluation: qualitative and quantitative. Different methods are suitable for answering different types of evaluation questions. This section provides an overview of the most common methods. The resources referred to at the end of this section give more detail on different methods and how to use them.

- **Introduction to logic models**

A logic model is a graphic which represents the theory of how an intervention produces its outcomes. It represents, in a simplified way, a hypothesis or 'theory of change' about how an intervention works. Process evaluations test and refine the hypothesis or 'theory of change' of the intervention represented in the logic model.

The design of, and terms used in, logic models vary. However, they commonly include aspects which summarise an intervention's:

- inputs/resources
- implementation/outputs
- outcomes/impact
- context
- relationships between them

- **Process evaluation**

Process evaluations aim to explain how complex interventions work. They are especially useful for interventions that include a number of interacting components operating in different ways and also when interventions address complex problems, or seek to generate multiple outcomes.

Process evaluations can be independent studies or conducted simultaneously with outcome evaluations such as randomised controlled trials. They examine the processes through which an intervention generates outcomes, that is, how they work.

- **Economic evaluation**

Economic evaluation aims to identify the value gained from resources used to implement a policy, programme or intervention. It helps to determine how effectively resources are being used and whether there are better ways of using them. Economic evaluation does this by considering the alternative use of those resources, and the benefits that would have been gained from taking an alternative course of action. This is called the opportunity cost.

3. [Training resources](#)

- Podcasts and powerpoint presentations are available on various topics:
 1. Why evaluate? Why use evidence?
 2. Evaluability assessment
 3. What makes a good research question?
 4. Creating a logic model to guide an evaluation
 5. What sort of evaluation can I do with limited resources?
 6. Evaluation in complex settings
 7. Evaluation and complexity
 8. Process evaluation
 9. Outcome evaluation
 10. Economic evaluation
 11. Intervention mapping
 12. Using case studies