

This summary is adopted from the work of Morris, L.L. (1987) "How to Communicate Evaluation Findings." and is a useful guideline for anyone having to write an evaluation report. Too often we rush into the actual evaluation without giving due consideration into how we are going to communicate our findings once the evaluation is complete. This framework is also useful when planning an evaluation as it covers all the areas that could potentially be involved in having to conduct one.

Section 1 - Summary

Make this a short summary for people who won't read the whole report. Give the reasons why the evaluation was conducted and who it is targeted at together with any conclusions and recommendations.

Should cover:

- ◆ What was evaluated?
- ◆ Why the evaluation was conducted?
- ◆ What are the major findings and recommendations?
- ◆ Who is the report aimed at?
- ◆ Where there any major restrictions placed on the evaluation? and by whom?

Section 2 - Background

In this part, cover the background to the evaluation and what is was meant to achieve. The program should be described and the depth of description will depend on whether the intended audience have any knowledge of the program or not. Don't assume that everybody will know. Don't leave things out but at the same time don't burden them with detail.

Should cover:

- ◆ origin of the program,
- ◆ aims of the program,
- ◆ participants in the program,
- ◆ characteristics of the materials,
- ◆ staff involved in the program.

Section 3 - Description of the Evaluation

This covers why the evaluation was conducted and what it was and was not intended to accomplish. State the methodology and any relevant technical information such as how the data was collected and what evaluation tools were used.

Should cover:

- ◆ purposes of the evaluation,
- ◆ evaluation design,
- ◆ outcome measures
 - instruments used,
 - data collection procedures,
- ◆ implementation measures.

Section 4 - Results

This will cover the results of the work from section 3 and can be supplemented by any other evidence collected. Try to use graphics (charts, tables etc.) to illustrate the information but use them sparingly to increase their effectiveness.

Should cover:

- ◆ results of the study
 - how many participants took any tests?
 - what were the results of the tests?
 - if there was a comparative group, how do they compare?
 - are any differences statistically significant.
 - if no control group, did performance change from test to test?

Section 5 - Discussion

This should discuss your findings and your interpretation of them. Always interpret your results in terms of the your stated goals.

This section should cover the interpretation of all the results in section 4. If the evaluation is not a large one then sections 4 and 5 could be combined. The results should always be related back to the purpose of the evaluation, something that doesn't always happen. Don't forget the unexpected results as they can often be the most interesting.

Should cover:

- ◆ are there alternative explanations to the results from the data?
- ◆ are these results generalisable?
- ◆ what were the strengths and weaknesses of the intervention?
- ◆ are certain parts of the program better received by certain groups?
- ◆ are any results related to certain attitudes or learner characteristics?
- ◆ were there any unexpected results?

Section 6 - Costs and Benefits

This is an optional section and would only be included if this had been part of the evaluation plan. As there is no definitive approach to investigating this whole area there will be a need to justify the approach taken. Not many evaluations look at costs but there is a growing need to include some information about this area. Evaluations and program interventions don't happen for free.

Should cover:

- ◆ what was the method used to calculate costs and effects/benefits?
 - how were costs and outcomes defined?
- ◆ what costs were associated with the program?
 - how were costs distributed (e.g. start-up costs, operating costs etc.)?
 - where there any hidden costs (e.g. in-kind contributions)?
- ◆ what benefits were associated with the program?
- ◆ what were measures of effectiveness (test scores; program completion etc.)?
- ◆ were there any unexpected benefits?

Section 7 - Conclusions

This section can be the most important section in the report apart from the summary. Some people will only read the summary and the conclusion section. Conclusions and recommendations should be stated clearly and precisely and these might be presented as a list as readers can easily scan them. Don't expect everyone to read your report from cover to cover. Make sure that you get your main points across in the opening summary and in the conclusion.

Should cover:

- ◆ what are the major conclusions of the evaluation?
- ◆ how sure are you of the conclusions?
- ◆ are all the results reliable?
- ◆ what are the recommendations regarding the program?
- ◆ can any predictions or hypotheses be put forward?
- ◆ are there any recommendations as to future evaluations?

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