Template concept note for an impact evaluation

Writing a concept note is the first step to planning an impact evaluation. It clearly outlines the purpose of the evaluation, who will be involved, possible evaluation questions and logistical details. This template outlines the structure of a template concept note for impact evaluation. It was developed by Irene Guijt, Simon Hearn and Tiina Pasanen for use in The Methods Lab projects.

Concept note outline

Programme name and date

This concept note initiates the planning for an impact evaluation of [programme name]. It outlines the evaluation objectives; the collaboration process among the different stakeholders; potential evaluation questions; budget; contractual issues; timeframes; and next steps.

Purpose and objectives

- Brief description of the programme's short-, medium- and long-term goals.
- How does the programme define impact (relative to the evaluation)?
- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- What does the programme want to learn from the evaluation?
- What can this evaluation contribute to the organisation and to the broader field?

Stakeholders and governance

- What is the role of the evaluator?
- What involvement is expected from the programme team and partners? Who are the key individuals concerned?
- Who should be informed and involved in decision-making?
- Is a steering or advisory group needed? If yes, who should be included?
- How will progress updates be made and how often?

Potential evaluation questions and learning objectives

- List several priority evaluation questions (not all possible options)
- Key principles for collaborative learning:
    - Learning from perspectives different to your own; the views and experiences of local people, field staff, programme managers and evaluators all matter.
    - Creating collective curiosity and responsibility for the learning process and the solutions found; this increases the chance of solutions being applied.
    - Building relationships of trust by sharing experiences and safely discussing successes and limitations, and co-inspiring each other.
    - Joint reflection, and sense-making.

Budget and contractual arrangements

- What is the estimated budget or budget ceiling?
- What are the funding sources?
- Through which department will contracting take place?
- Are there any constraints on what or when the budget is to be used?

Estimated timeline

- What and when are the key internal and external milestones for the evaluation?
- What kind of evaluability assessment is needed? What are the parameters? What is the purpose? When will it be conducted? Who will conduct it? What resources are needed? What involvement from the programme is needed? What are the outputs?

Evaluation timeline & activities

When	Activity	Main outputs and deliverables
Phase 1. Planning, evaluability assessment, design		
Phase 2. Data collection & analysis		
Phase 3. Report writing, review & dissemination		