



Department
for International
Development

Influence By Design

How to Scope, Commission, and
Support Influential Evaluation

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Who and what is this guide for?

This user-friendly guide for DFID staff covers how to scope, commission, and support the delivery of useful, influential evaluation.

Topic	When to Use
1. Scoping for Use and Influence	While scoping the evaluation and writing the Terms of Reference.
2. Assessing Bids for Use and Influence	While reviewing evaluation proposals/bids.
3. Planning for Use and Influence	During the first phase of the evaluation, working with the evaluation team.
4. Managing for Use, Influence, and Learning	Throughout the evaluation.

 Click or tap any link to jump to the section you need.



... or, go to the next page



1. Scoping for Use and Influence

When to use:

While scoping the evaluation and writing the Terms of Reference.

Purpose:

To think purposefully about:

- what kinds of influence are needed
- who will help you achieve that, and
- how those people will need to be involved in the embedded learning processes surrounding the evaluation.



1. Scoping for Use and Influence

How to use:

Work through the tools with as much information as you have at hand.

Use the insights to scope the evaluation and provide bidders with an indication of the evaluation's intended uses and influences.

Once the evaluation team is hired, work through the tools with them in more detail to finalise the use and influence strategy for the evaluation.

Note:

Need tips for writing [Key Evaluation Questions](#) (KEQs) to include in a ToR? → [Skip to KEQs](#).



1. Scoping for Use and Influence

Topics covered:  Click to jump ahead to the tools you need:

(a)
Needed
Influence

- What kinds of use and influence are needed from this evaluation, and why?
- Ultimately, who needs to use the evaluation insights or be influenced, in what ways?
- What is the timing of any needed use and influence?
- How important is each kind of use and influence?

(b)
Terms of
Reference

- What questions should we ask bidders in the Terms of Reference, to help determine which have the capability to design and conduct useful, influential evaluation?



1(a) Needed Influence

Work through the next few pages to figure out:

What kinds of use and influence are needed from this evaluation?

Who are the intended users and 'influencees',

when do they need their insights,

about what, and

to feed into what deliberations or decisions?

Finally, what is the relative importance of each intended use or influence, and why?

Use the answers to these questions in the Terms of Reference.



Determining what use and influence are needed

Fill in the boxes as you work through the tables.

Type of Use or Influence	About What and For Whom?	Timeframe	Importance
to inform decision making about programme streamlining / improvements			<input type="radio"/> Extremely Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Desirable <input type="radio"/> Not Relevant
to inform decision making about programme expansion, downscaling, or continuation			<input type="radio"/> Extremely Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Desirable <input type="radio"/> Not Relevant
to get people to pay attention to an issue			<input type="radio"/> Extremely Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Desirable <input type="radio"/> Not Relevant



Determining what use and influence are needed

Fill in the boxes as you work through the tables.

Type of Use or Influence	About What and For Whom?	Timeframe	Importance
to lift understanding			<input type="radio"/> Extremely Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Desirable <input type="radio"/> Not Relevant
to counter erroneously-held beliefs and assumptions			<input type="radio"/> Extremely Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Desirable <input type="radio"/> Not Relevant
to diffuse evidence of success or failure			<input type="radio"/> Extremely Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Desirable <input type="radio"/> Not Relevant



Determining what use and influence are needed

Fill in the boxes as you work through the tables.

Type of Use or Influence	About What and For Whom?	Timeframe	Importance
to shift behaviour and practice			<input type="radio"/> Extremely Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Desirable <input type="radio"/> Not Relevant
to garner political or financial support for a particular course of action			<input type="radio"/> Extremely Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Desirable <input type="radio"/> Not Relevant
to change social or organisational norms			<input type="radio"/> Extremely Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Desirable <input type="radio"/> Not Relevant



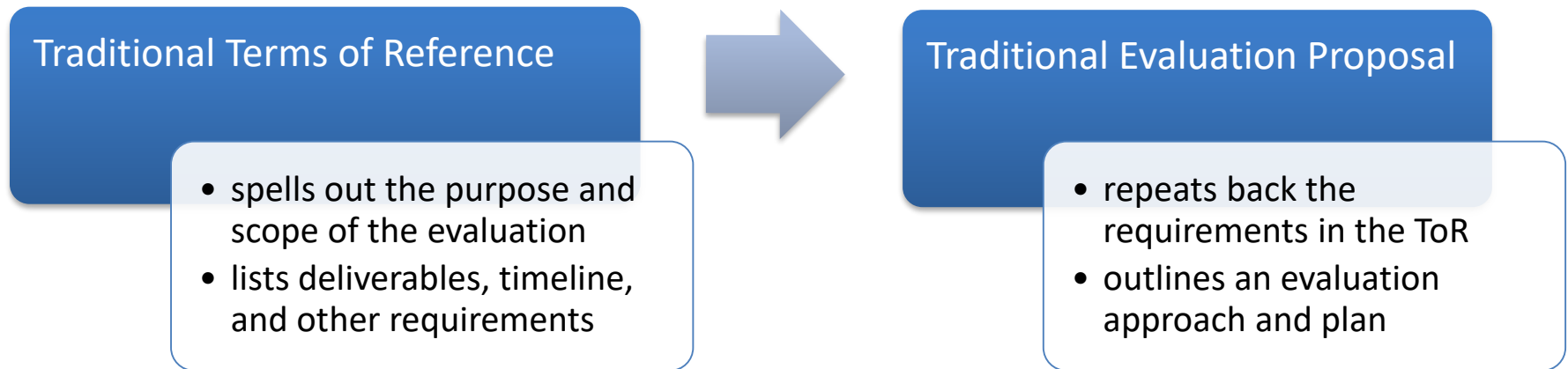
Determining what use and influence are needed

Fill in the boxes as you work through the tables.

Type of Use or Influence	About What and For Whom?	Timeframe	Importance
to set an agenda			<input type="radio"/> Extremely Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Desirable <input type="radio"/> Not Relevant
to influence policy			<input type="radio"/> Extremely Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Desirable <input type="radio"/> Not Relevant
for something else: <input type="text"/>			<input type="radio"/> Extremely Important <input type="radio"/> Important <input type="radio"/> Desirable <input type="radio"/> Not Relevant



1(b) Terms of Reference



A traditional Terms of Reference asks little about use and influence.

This makes it difficult to tell how likely it is that the proposed evaluation (process and products) will be both useful and influential.

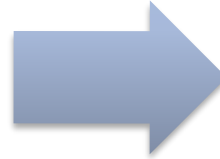
The key is to ask probing questions that will help you tell the difference.



The Use and Influence-Focused ToR

Use and Influence-Focused Terms of Reference

- Asks probing questions about use and influence, to which the 'correct' answers are not obvious
- Asks not just for the proposed approach, but the thinking behind it



Use and Influence-Focused Evaluation Proposal

- Doesn't simply repeat back what the ToR says
- Shows a thoughtful, nuanced grasp of how to design, implement, and fine-tune useful, influential evaluation

Useful, influential evaluation is, by definition, responsive in real time.

That means that even the best-laid plans *will change*.

What DfID needs is not a perfect-looking *plan*, but a team who 'gets it' and clearly has the capability to create useful, influential evaluation.



Questions to ask in the ToR

1. Use & Influence Priorities

- What is your understanding of the *most important* ways in which the evaluation is intended to be used and influential – where, for whom, and in what timeframes?

2. Timeliness Strategy

- Given the key decision points or budgetary cycles the evaluation will need to feed into, what evaluation design and approach will help ensure the right people get the needed insights and understandings from the evaluation *at the times they need them*?

3. Cost-Effective Use & Influence Strategy

- Given the time and budgetary constraints for the evaluation, what do you anticipate being the most powerful and feasible strategies to maximise the use and influence of the evaluation?



Questions to ask in the ToR

4. Stakeholder Involvement Strategy

- Who do you anticipate *directly* involving in the evaluation process in order to maximise eventual use and influence?
- Where and how do you intend to involve those people, and why?

5. Reporting and Communications Strategy

- What strategies do you propose to ensure clear and understandable communication of evaluation findings to key audiences?
- How do you make new understandings 'stick'?

6. Risk Mitigation Strategy

- What risks and challenges do you anticipate for achieving evaluation use and influence?
- How do you plan to mitigate these?

Next: [How to evaluate responses to these questions.](#)

2. Assessing Bids for Use and Influence

When to use: When reviewing evaluation proposals/bids.

Purpose: Identify the proposals/bids and evaluation teams best placed to deliver highly useful and influential evaluation.

Select a great evaluation team to work with.



2. Assessing Bids for Use and Influence

How to use:

Have each person assessing the bids work through the tools individually or in pairs.

Come together to compare initial assessments and discuss any differences.

Identify any bids that have 'deal-breaker' weaknesses; eliminate those proposals.

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the remaining acceptable proposals, and choose which will be offered the contract.



2. Assessing for Use and Influence

Topics covered:  Click to jump ahead to the tools you need:

(a)
Focus for
Influence

- An evaluation plan that focuses directly on where, why, when, and for whom there is a need to influence thinking, dialogue, action, and/or systems.
- An evaluation timeline that will deliver answers when they can actually be used.

(b)
Useful Qu'ns
& Answers

- Important evaluative questions to which the evaluation is designed to provide answers.
- Clear and direct answers to important evaluation questions, succinctly expressed.
- Questions, insights, and answers about things we don't already know (or, that too few people know, believe, or are persuaded by).

(c)
Simplicity

- The simplest and most appropriate mix of methodologies to credibly and validly answer the evaluation questions as cost-effectively as possible within the required timeframe.

(d)
Clarity

- Crystal clear data visualisation.
- Plain language explanations that people can understand and apply.
- Reports structured using evaluation questions as the framework.
- Communicated in ways that make the learnings 'sticky' (compelling and memorable).



2(a) Assessing focus for influence

When assessing an evaluation proposal, look for:

- **A clear understanding** of what it takes to make evaluation both useful and influential;
- **A direct line of sight** between the needed use/influence and the approach to the evaluation.

A good place to start is [the list of questions we asked bidders in the Terms of Reference.](#)

[What should you look for in the answers to these questions?](#)



Rate proposals on use and influence priorities and timeliness strategy

TOPIC	TO R QUESTION	WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE ANSWER	YOUR ASSESSMENT
1. Use & Influence Priorities	What is your understanding of the <i>most important</i> ways in which the evaluation is intended to be used and influential – where, for whom, and in what timeframes?	<p>A response that simply trots out what you told them in the ToR is not particularly informative. Neither is a laundry list of all possible uses.</p> <p>Look for evidence of genuine insight into <i>what's really important</i> in the grand scheme of things – <i>and how they know</i>. Pay attention to the thinking.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Strong Notes: <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>
2. Timeliness Strategy	Given the key decision points or budgetary cycles the evaluation will need to feed into, what evaluation design and approach will help ensure the right people get the needed insights and understandings from the evaluation at the times they need them?	<p>A strong proposal will demonstrate a clear understanding that timely though approximate answers to important evaluation questions are far more valuable than precise answers that arrive far too late to be useful.</p> <p>Look for smart thinking about streamlining the evaluation design and getting insights to stakeholders in real time, including ways <i>other</i> than written reports, and that involve key influencers and other intended users.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Strong Notes: <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>



Rate proposals on smart, cost-effective use, influence, & stakeholder involvement strategies

TOPIC	TOR QUESTION	WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE ANSWER	YOUR ASSESSMENT
<p>3. Cost-Effective Use and Influence Strategy</p>	<p>Given the time and budgetary constraints for the evaluation, what do you anticipate being the most powerful and feasible strategies to maximise the use and influence of the evaluation?</p>	<p>Any experienced evaluation firm can laundry list a wide range of ideas for maximizing use and influence.</p> <p>What separates the best from the rest is thoughtful channelling of evaluation bandwidth into the most important strategies that will really make a difference.</p>	<p> <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Strong </p> <p>Notes:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p>4. Stakeholder Involvement Strategy</p>	<p>Who do you anticipate <i>directly</i> involving in the evaluation process in order to maximise eventual use and influence?</p> <p>Where and how do you intend to involve those people, and why?</p>	<p>Again, it's easy to suggest involving everyone and anyone in the evaluation process in an attempt to cover all bases.</p> <p>The smart money here should be on whose involvement will yield the highest level of validity, credibility, social justice, use and influence for the investment of time and effort – in ways that feel to the participants like a worthwhile use of their time and that will be engaging and enjoyable.</p>	<p> <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Strong </p> <p>Notes:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>



Rate proposals on reporting and communications, & use and influence risk mitigation strategies

TOPIC	TOR QUESTION	WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE ANSWER	YOUR ASSESSMENT
<p>5. Reporting & Communications Strategy</p>	<p>What strategies do you propose to ensure clear and understandable communication of evaluation findings to key audiences?</p> <p>How do you make new understandings 'stick'?</p>	<p>An 'in theory' answer to this question will be far less informative than a demonstration of how the evaluation team has actually done this in the past.</p> <p>Ask for examples of previous evaluation presentations and reports, with particular attention to the executive summaries and how succinctly they convey the findings.</p>	<p> <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Strong </p> <p>Notes:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p>6. Risk Mitigation Strategy</p>	<p>What risks and challenges do you anticipate for achieving evaluation use and influence, and how do you plan to mitigate these?</p>	<p>A contractor who has not worked with DfID before may have limited knowledge of the particular challenges faced. However, an experienced evaluation team should be able to anticipate the kinds of challenges involved, and have thoughtful strategies to address them.</p> <p>A strong answer to this question will help the internal project management team 'get real' about what resources and support will be needed, and plan effectively to make it happen.</p>	<p> <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Strong </p> <p>Notes:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>



2(b) Assessing evaluation questions & answers

Few things are more frustrating to evaluation audiences than:

- a report that delivers **a sea of evidence but no clear, succinct answers** to the questions people had about the programme.
- a report that **tells us what we already knew**.

[The one exception: When the evaluation *finally* manages to convince an audience that had been hard to persuade, but now – thanks to the evaluation – they finally ‘get it’.]

How to assess bidders on useful questions and answers:

Evaluate sample executive summaries from your bidders, focusing on how they handled evaluation questions and answers.



[What should you look for?](#)



Rate sample executive summaries on how they handle evaluation questions and answers

ELEMENT	WHAT IT IS	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	YOUR ASSESSMENT
1. Key Evaluation Questions	The high-level evaluation questions that guided the entire evaluation (<u>not</u> the interview or survey questions). This is what we didn't know before, but that the evaluation sought to figure out.	<p>Influential evaluations are framed around important high-level questions that will clearly feed into decision-making, thinking, deliberation, and action.</p> <p>Weaker examples are unclear about what we were trying to find out from the evaluation. Or, it is framed around very narrow or "wouldn't it be nice to know" questions rather than important issues on which decision makers need clarity.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Strong Notes: <div style="border: 1px solid gray; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>
2. Actual Evaluative Answers	How well the evaluation <i>actually answered</i> those high-level questions – and told you the answers in the executive summary.	<p>Strong examples give clear, succinct answers to the high-level evaluation questions, right there in the executive summary. Exactly what you needed to know, expressed clearly and succinctly.</p> <p>Weak examples are frustratingly vague about the answers (somehow the evidence summary is supposed to speak for itself – except that it doesn't). Or the executive summary may simply say that the answers are buried in the report (you would have to find them yourself).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Strong Notes: <div style="border: 1px solid gray; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>



2(c) The Importance of Simplicity for Use & Influence

Highly influential research and evaluation is most often *breathtakingly simple* in its design.

Research and evaluation that gathers dust, more often than not, has boggled and confused audiences with far more complex methodology than was needed to answer the questions.

*“The evidence of history is clear that the research studies with the greatest impact ... are **breathtakingly simple** in terms of the questions posed, the methods and designs used, the statistics brought to bear on the data, and the take-home messages.”*

-- Peterson & Park (2010)



Simple, but not simplistic.

What we need: The *simplest possible* approach and methodologies needed to *credibly and validly* answer the evaluation questions *as cost-effectively as possible* within the required timeframe.

“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.”

-- Leonardo Da Vinci

How to find it: Emphasise simplicity in the ToR.
Have each reviewer rate proposals for simplicity.
Convene and discuss.



Rate each proposal for simplicity

OVERLY SIMPLISTIC ●	A LITTLE TOO SIMPLISTIC ●	SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE ●	A LITTLE TOO COMPLICATED ●	OVERLY COMPLICATED ●
<p>Too rudimentary a design to credibly and validly answer the most important evaluation questions.</p>	<p>Well designed to answer some of the evaluation questions, but could use a more sophisticated design to unearth important nuances, without compromising timeliness.</p>	<p>“The sweet spot”. The simplest possible approach and methodologies needed to credibly and validly answer the evaluation questions as cost-effectively as possible within the required timeframe.</p>	<p>Overall, a good design, could be simplified and streamlined to enhance timeliness and/or understandability.</p>	<p>Overly elaborate or complicated design; will be difficult to explain to those who need to use or be influenced by the evaluation process or findings.</p>

Notes:



Cost-Effective and Timely Uses of Simplicity

Remember: It is better to have approximate answers in time for decision making than precise answers that are too late to use. Sometimes a simpler and leaner methodology is a smart way to achieve that.

Alternatively, a simple element in the design can be a good way to get preliminary answers before the more sophisticated evidence comes through later on.



2(d) Clarity

Clarity is linked to simplicity. The simpler the evaluation design and methodology, the more clarity is possible when explaining the learnings from it and why people should believe them.

Whatever evaluation framework and methodologies are used, **reporting needs to be crystal clear**, supported with high quality **data visualisation**, and communicated so the learnings are **easy to grasp**.

Also important is finding ways to communicate the learnings so they are **'sticky'** – compelling, memorable, and interesting, so they stick in the audience's minds.

How to assess: Ask for sample executive summaries or reports, and [use the guidelines on the next few pages](#) to rate them independently first, then discuss as a group.



Rate sample executive summaries or evaluation reports on clarity of language and data viz

ELEMENT	WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	YOUR ASSESSMENT
1. Language	How intelligible is the language for a non-technical audience?	<p>A good report gets straight to the point and explains things in a way that is easy to follow, even for someone not familiar with evaluation or research.</p> <p>If the report feels like heavy going, with complicated terminology and sentences you need to read twice, clarity is low.</p> <p>Tip: Run the report through a Fog Index checker, which tells you how many years of formal education are needed to understand it. More than 12 → unclear.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Strong Notes: <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>
2. Data Visualisation	<p>How easy to understand are the graphs, figures, and other non-text ways of explaining things – and are there enough of them?</p> <p>Huge advances have been made in recent years in the quality of data visualisation for evaluation.</p>	<p>A good chart (or infographic) can be understood <i>without</i> a paragraph of explanation. Its headline explicitly states what you should notice, and reads more like a newspaper headline than simply saying what numbers have been graphed.</p> <p>Weak reports are overly wordy with insufficient use of visuals to facilitate understanding. Charts and graphs often use the program defaults, and are hard to understand, especially without the explanations in text.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Strong Notes: <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>



Rate sample executive summaries or evaluation reports on clarity of structure and 'stickiness'

ELEMENT	WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	YOUR ASSESSMENT
3. Report Structure	How well does the structure of the report or executive summary help maximise clarity?	<p>A good structure is layered, 2-20-50 (or similar): A good structure is layered, 2-30-50 (or similar): a 2-page executive summary, a 20-30 page main report (with plenty of visuals), and appendices including further detail. The strongest examples are structured using the high-level key evaluation questions as section headings.</p> <p>Weak examples report findings by evidence source like a Master's thesis, making it hard to consider the relevant pieces of evidence as a set.</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Strong </div> <p>Notes:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>
4. 'Stickiness'	<p>How well does the report help convey the key insights in ways that make them stick in people's minds?</p> <p>Key resource: Heath & Heath (2007). <i>Made to Stick</i>.</p>	<p>The best examples capture and hold people's attention and get them to care about the issues; present the core of the ideas without oversimplifying; and weave the evidence into compelling stories that make insights credible and concrete, so that people believe, understand, and remember them.</p> <p>Weak examples are dry, technical, cluttered, and difficult to wade through.</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Strong </div> <p>Notes:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>



3. Planning for Use and Influence

When to use:

During the first phase of the evaluation, working with the evaluation team.

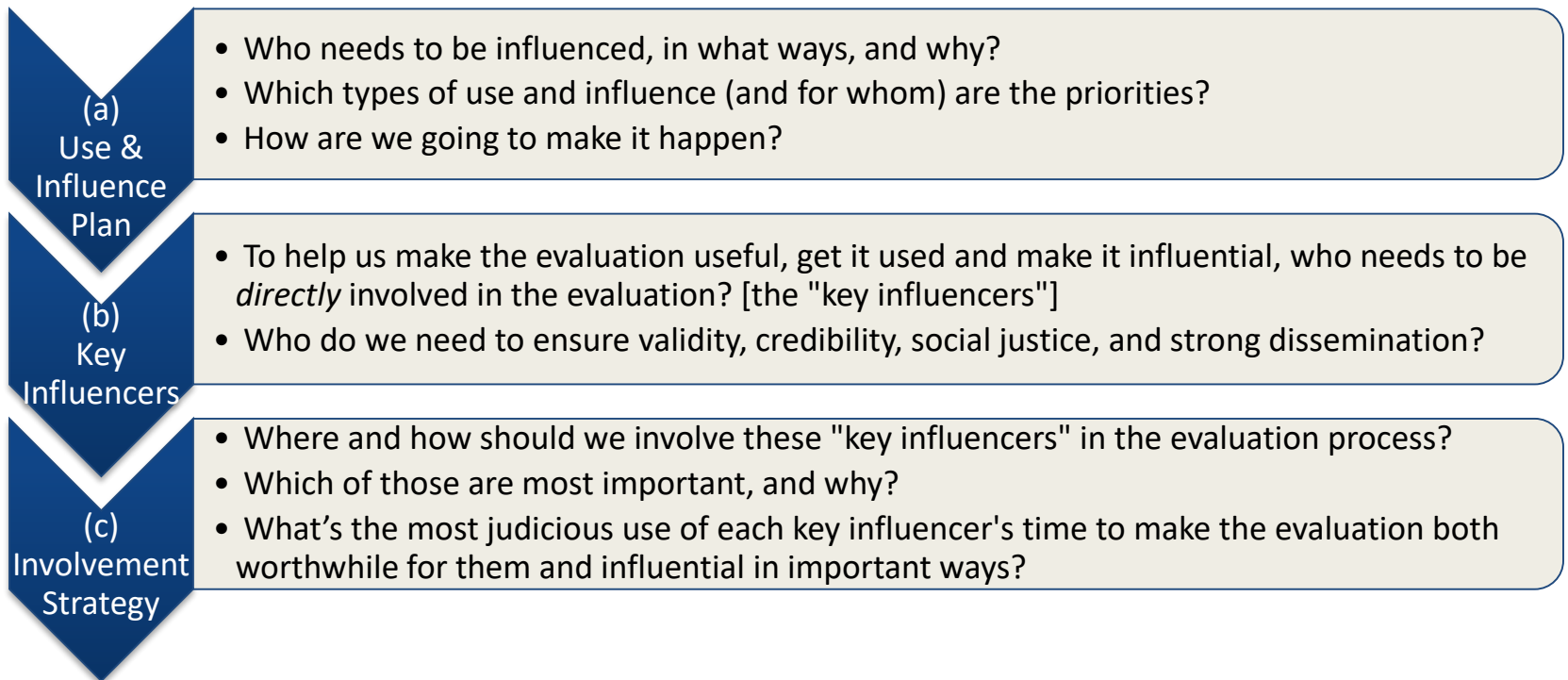
Purpose:

Formulate a comprehensive use and influence strategy to guide the evaluation and maximise its value to DfID and its partners.



3. Planning for Use and Influence

Topics covered:  Click to jump ahead to the tools you need:



3(a) The Use and Influence Plan

One of the most important deliverables to produce early on is a Use and Influence Plan.

Ideally, this should be **developed *jointly*** between the internal (DFID) [Evaluation Management Team](#) and the external evaluation team.

The Use and Influence Plan should be a **living document** that adapts to changes in what kinds of use and influence are needed and the success of current use and influence efforts.



What goes into a Use & Influence Plan?

The
Basics

1. Use and influence needs and priorities
2. Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)
3. A simple but effective evaluation design
4. A communication and dissemination strategy

Stakeholder
Involvement

5. Key influencers (the people who will be directly involved in some part of in the evaluation process)
6. An involvement strategy (for the key influencers)

Evaluation
Management

7. Effective internal support for the evaluation
8. A plan for tracking and evaluating use and influence



Use and influence needs and priorities

Refer back to Section [1\(a\) Needed Influence](#); work through this in more detail, this time with the evaluation team.

What did you identify as the **three most important** types of use/influence and people to influence for this evaluation?

1.

2.

3.

Next: Focusing the evaluation with [Key Evaluation Questions](#)



Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)

Useful, influential evaluations deliver credible, valid, timely answers to important evaluative questions.

DFID aligns with OECD DAC guidance on evaluation, and evaluation questions should consider and address the relevant DAC criteria:

1. Relevance
2. Coherence
3. Effectiveness
4. Efficiency
5. Impact
6. Sustainability

* OECD DAC Criteria

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>



Formulating the Key Evaluation Questions

Adapt (reword) each generic KEQ so that it makes sense for this evaluation project.

Jot down the key things that should be covered under each broad KEQ.

TOPIC	GUIDANCE	KEY EVALUATION QUESTION	SUBQUESTIONS/ COVERAGE
1. Relevance	<p>Is the intervention doing the right things? (extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.</p>		
2. Coherence	<p>How well does the intervention fit? The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution</p>		

TIP: [Jump back to the proposal evaluation section to recall some do's and don'ts of KEQs](#)

Formulating the Key Evaluation Questions

Evaluative questions ask not just what the results were, but how good they were.

TOPIC	GUIDANCE	KEY EVALUATION QUESTION	SUBQUESTIONS/ COVERAGE
3. Effectiveness	Is the intervention achieving its objectives? The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.		
4. Efficiency	How well are resources being used? The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.		



Formulating the Key Evaluation Questions

TOPIC	GUIDANCE	KEY EVALUATION QUESTION	SUBQUESTIONS/ COVERAGE
5. Impact	What difference does the intervention make? The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.		
6. Sustainability	Will the benefits last? The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue.		

Ask not just what the costs were, but how reasonable they were.

Do we really need to cover all of these KEQs?

All evaluations should cover most (and sometimes all) of these KEQs.

How do we know if one or more is not necessary?

- ✓ Check the [use and influence needs and priorities](#).
- ✓ Who needs to know what, and why?
- ✓ If no stakeholder needs the answer, omit the question.

Remember: *Never* leave out an evaluation question just because you believe it will be too difficult to answer.

It is always useful and usually possible to get *approximate answers to important questions*, even if they can't be answered with a high degree of certainty.



A simple but effective evaluation design

Revisit the earlier section and tools on [The Importance of Simplicity for Use & Influence](#). Discuss how best to find the **“evaluation design sweet spot”** (simple but effective).

OVERLY SIMPLISTIC	A LITTLE TOO SIMPLISTIC	SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE	A LITTLE TOO COMPLICATED	OVERLY COMPLICATED
Too rudimentary a design to credibly and validly answer the most important evaluation questions.	Well designed to answer some of the evaluation questions, but could use a more sophisticated design to unearth important nuances, without compromising timeliness.	“The sweet spot”. The simplest possible approach and methodologies needed to credibly and validly answer the evaluation questions as cost-effectively as possible within the required timeframe.	Overall, a good design, could be simplified and streamlined to enhance timeliness and/or understandability.	Overly elaborate or complicated design; will be difficult to explain to those who need to use or be influenced by the evaluation process or findings.

Notes:



A communication and dissemination strategy

How will we keep stakeholders interested, engaged, and informed throughout the evaluation process?

Refer back to the ground work you did earlier in [Section 1\(a\)](#) identifying the use and influence needs and priorities.

Carefully consider (and ask) each stakeholder audience:

What are they most interested in?

When do they need it, to feed into what deliberations or decisions – or simply to be kept in the loop?

What level of detail do they need and want?

What is the most effective mode of communication for them?
Are they readers or listeners?

"Very few people even know that there are readers and there are listeners, and that very few people are both. Even fewer know which of the two they themselves are."

-- Peter F. Drucker



A high-level basic communication plan

Bring the most important information together into the following table.

AUDIENCE	WHAT THEY NEED	WHEN THEY NEED IT	HOW THEY NEED IT

The above table outlines the high-level basics of the communication plan.

Next, we delve into how we will use stakeholder involvement to help disseminate and embed evaluation insights and thinking.

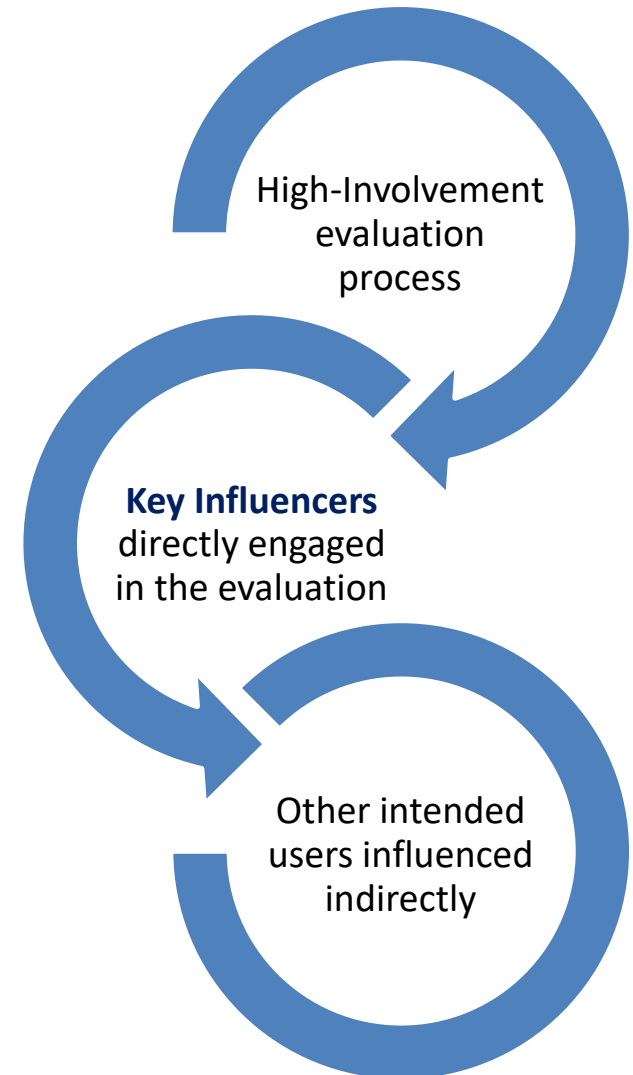


3(b) Key Influencers

Not everyone can be *directly* involved in the evaluation, so we need to make smart decisions about who to involve and why.

These people will be the “**key influencers**”.

If we involve them directly in the evaluation process, they can help us influence others.



Who should be the key influencers?

The next few pages will help us figure out **who we need to involve *directly* in the evaluation:**

Who can help influence the people and systems we need to influence?

Who can help bring credibility to the evaluation?

Whose expertise do we need to get the evaluation right?

Who has the right to be involved in the evaluation?



Who can help influence the people and systems we need to influence?

Thinking about [the people you most need to influence](#):

Who do those people listen to?

Who has the authority to change systems and processes, if needed?

Who is best placed to help persuade audiences, disseminate evaluation insights and findings – within DFID, in country, and more widely?

Who could potentially derail any positive change if they were *unconvinced* about the validity or credibility of the evaluation?

Write your ideas in the box below:



Who could help bring credibility to the evaluation?

Who needs to be involved to ensure the evaluation is seen as credible and fair in the eyes of those who ultimately need to be influenced?

Who are likely to be influential critics of the evaluation? Should a limited number of these people be invited to participate themselves?

For those who are likely to be critical of the evaluation, whose expertise or perspective do they most respect?



Whose expertise do we need to get the evaluation right?

Valid conclusions are crucial for the evaluation to be influential.

Who will supply the needed expertise in each of the following areas?

Type of Expertise	Best Sources of That Expertise
Contextual expertise – knowledge of local context (political, environmental, social, economic), the key challenges, and what is practical for people on the ground	
Cultural expertise – familiarity with values, aspirations, local protocol, leaders, appropriate ways of approaching and engaging with the community	
Subject matter expertise – content, design, academic, and practical/applied knowledge about the specific change the programme seeks to achieve	



“Nothing about us, without us”

Social justice is an important aspect of every evaluation.

Which groups have a right to be involved, to ensure their voices are given space and that their expertise and perspectives are acknowledged and used?

Groups with a right to be at the table	Best people to include
Indigenous peoples – the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination, and to participating in decisions and actions that affect them.	
Historically underserved and/or marginalised groups – equitable outcomes can’t be achieved without a deep understanding of why the current approaches have failed some people.	
Advocacy groups for those with limited ability to speak for themselves (e.g., children, the elderly, people with severe illnesses or disabilities).	



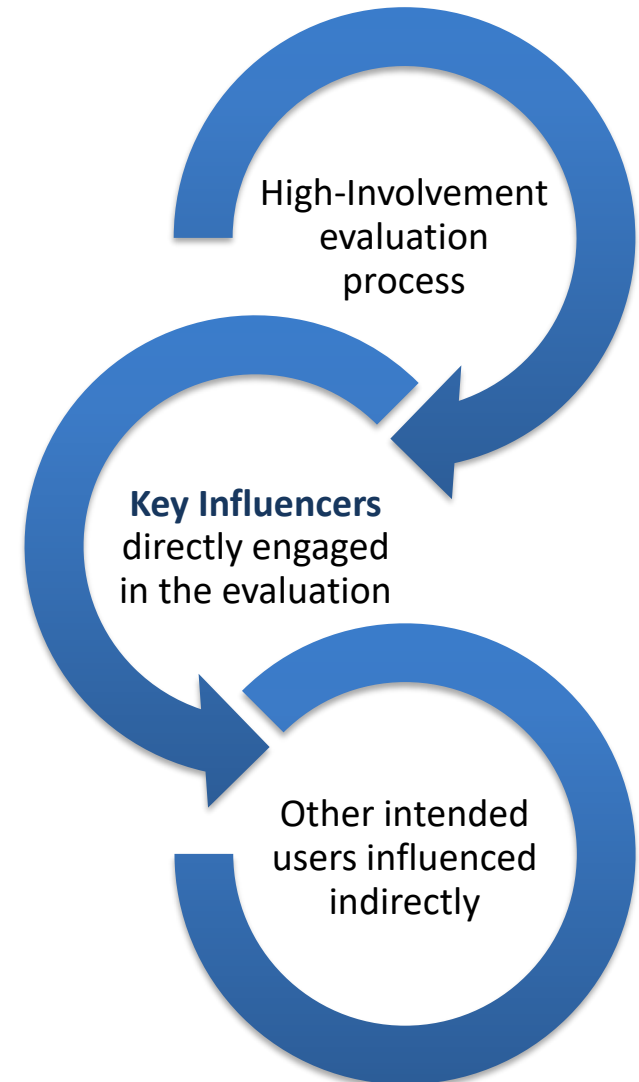
3(c) Involvement Strategy

The final decision about who to involve boils down to three questions:

Drawing on the ideas from the previous section, who is it most important to involve *directly* in the evaluation process?

In which parts of the evaluation process should we involve them?

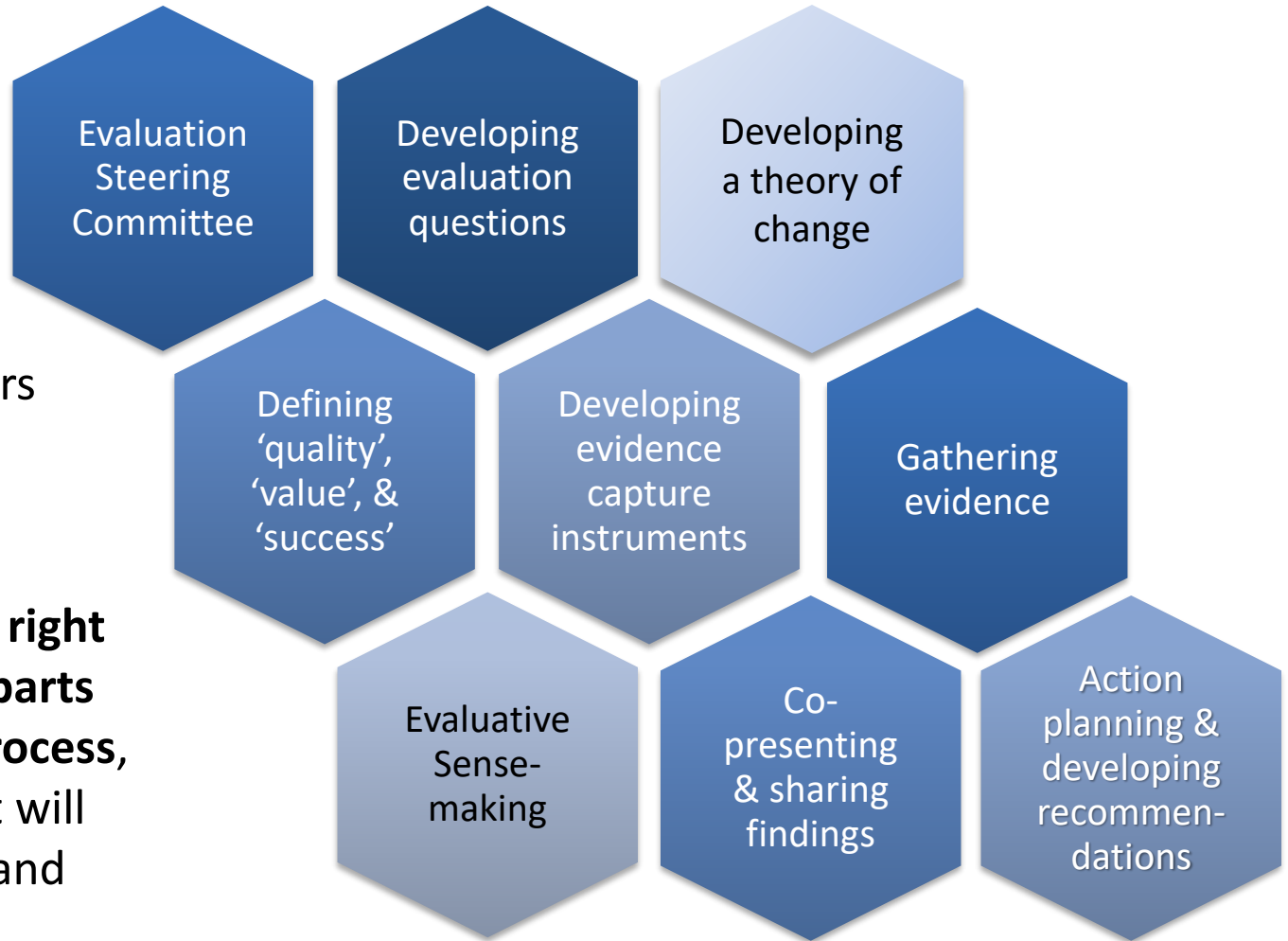
What are the *best ways* to involve them?



Work through the next few pages to find out.



The many opportunities for involvement



Don't aim to involve *all* the key influencers at *every* stage in the evaluation process.

Instead, **involve the right people in the right parts of the evaluation process**, and in the ways that will work well for them and for the project.



Who will you involve in the high-level and front end thinking?

Consider: Decision makers at strategic & operational levels; community leaders; advocacy group leaders; evaluation & subject matter experts

Evaluation Steering Committee

Developing evaluation questions

Developing a theory of change

Consider: Policy experts; local context & culture experts; subject matter experts; on-the-ground implementers; impactees

Defining 'quality', 'value', & 'success'

Developing evidence capture instruments

Gathering evidence

Consider: Decision makers at strategic & operational levels programme staff; impactees; community members; policy & programme designers

Evaluative Sense-making

Co-presenting & sharing findings

Action planning & developing recommendations

Write names in the call-out boxes of key influencers to involve in each part of the process.

Who will you involve in working with the evidence?

Evaluation Steering Committee

Developing evaluation questions

Developing a theory of change

Defining 'quality', 'value', & 'success'

Developing evidence capture instruments

Gathering evidence

Evaluative Sense-making

Co-presenting & sharing findings

Action planning & developing recommendations

Consider: Monitoring staff; anyone skeptical about the programme or the evaluation

Consider: those who need to "see for themselves" to understand and believe; those in a good position to capture the evidence as part of their regular work.

Consider: policy & operational leaders; impactees; indigenous groups; others familiar with the community context, culture, needs, & aspirations; programme staff; policy & programme designers



Who will you involve in making use happen?

Evaluation Steering Committee

Developing evaluation questions

Consider: Senior leaders; excellent presenters and persuaders; whoever will be most influential with each audience you need to engage.

Defining 'quality', 'value', & 'success'

Developing evidence capture instruments

Gathering evidence

Consider: Those who will lead and implement subsequent change. [They know what's feasible; helping design the change will help ensure they will own and drive it.]

Consider: Decision makers at strategic & operational levels; policy & programme designers; programme staff; impactees (or those close to them).

Evaluative Sense-making

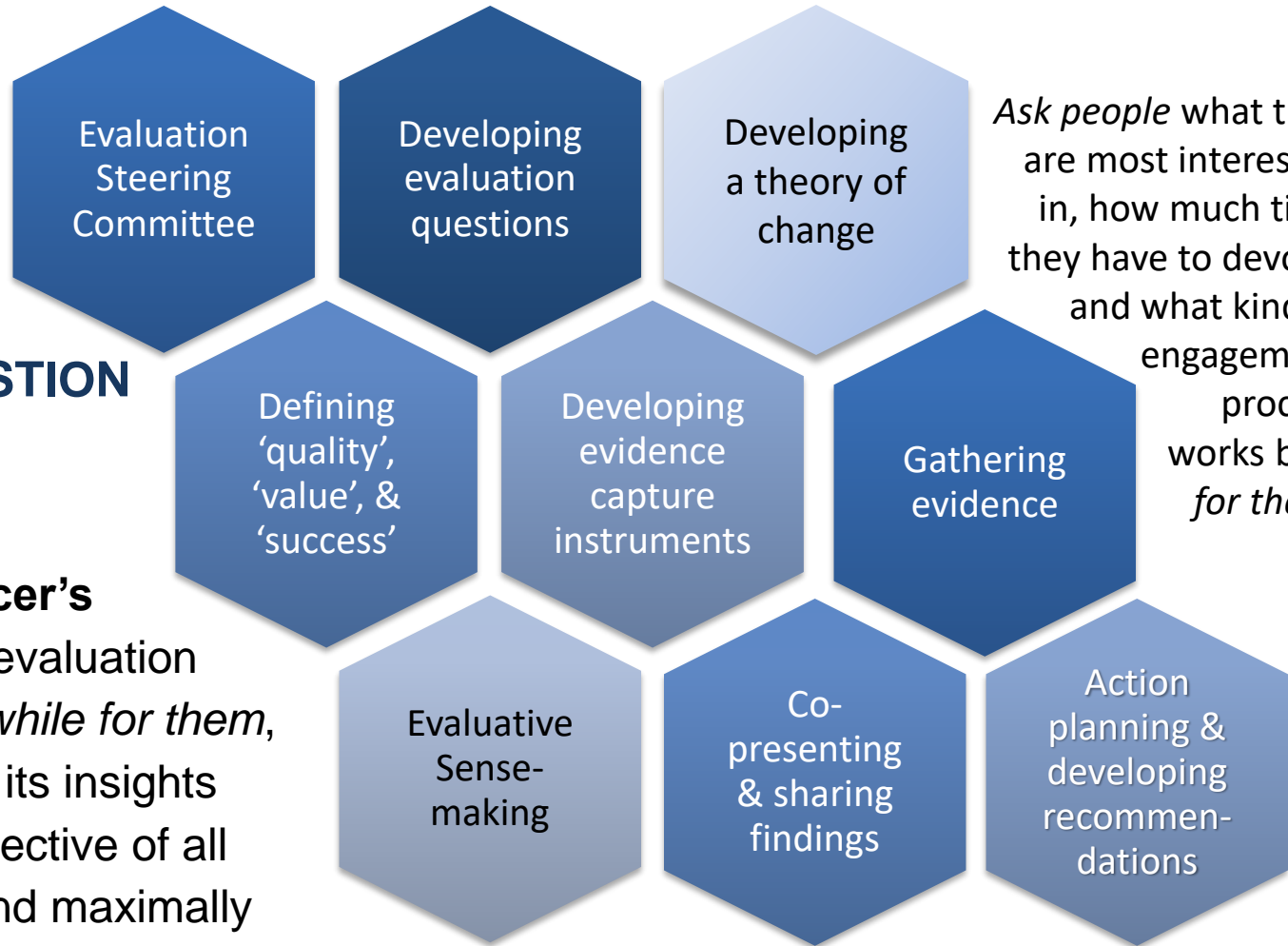
Co-presenting & sharing findings

Action planning & developing recommendations

Write names in the call-out boxes of key influencers to involve in each part of the process.



In what ways will you involve people?



Ask people what they are most interested in, how much time they have to devote, and what kind of engagement process works best for them.

GUIDING QUESTION

What's the most judicious use of each key influencer's time to make the evaluation experience *worthwhile for them*, as well as making its insights credible, valid, reflective of all relevant voices, and maximally influential?



4. Managing for Use, Influence, and Learning

When to use:

Throughout the evaluation.

Purpose:

Gear the evaluation for success and support it along the way so that it has the best possible chance of delivering highly useful and influential evaluation.

Work from within to ensure that the evaluation's insights get used.



4. Managing for Use, Influence, and Learning

(a) Effective Internal Support

- Form a well-positioned internal Evaluation Management Team (more than one person)
- Assign a senior sponsor and/or convene a steering or advisory group.
- Help the evaluation team gain access to key influencers and audiences
- Use inside knowledge to inform the timing and crafting of communications

(b) Tracking Use & Influence

- Check whether the planned use and influence strategies are actually being implemented.
- Find out whether people are aware of the evaluation, and whether they see it as valid, credible, potentially useful and valuable.
- Document actual instances of use and influence as the evaluation progresses.



4(a) Effective internal support

Start by convening an internal (DfID) **Evaluation Management Team** consisting of three to four people.

Your EMT members:



Can't do three?
Opt for two at least.

Have this team meet with the contracted evaluation team to work through each of the tools in this and the previous sections, to devise a comprehensive use and influence strategy.

Schedule regular check-ins throughout the evaluation, to keep the use and influence strategy alive by tracking its implementation, revising it as needed, and evaluating its success.



Turnover-proof your evaluation oversight

Evaluations can end up not being useful or influential – and sometimes even go off the rails entirely – when the internal project manager leaves, either temporarily or permanently.

This can happen due to promotion, transfer, secondment, parental leave, illness, and many other reasons.

We can mitigate this risk by having a small team of DfID staff fully up to speed on the evaluation at all times, so that if one or two people are unavailable or have to drop off, the others can seamlessly pick up the internal support and management role.

Three or four heads are better than one, which is an added bonus of this structure. It also provides a great opportunity for professional development, by including less experienced staff on the team.

Up next: Who will be your senior sponsor or steering committee?



Identify senior sponsor(s) for the project

Most evaluations will have far more influence if they are assigned a senior sponsor or steering committee.

The more senior the sponsor, the more clearly it conveys the importance of the evaluation.

Senior sponsors can:

- support and champion the work
- keep their senior colleagues up to speed
- help secure access to key audiences
- lend additional credibility and gravitas to the project

Who will be your senior sponsor(s)?

In which circles will you need these kinds of credibility and influence?

Is there any one person who can meet that need and is available?

If not, opt for a steering committee.



Some discussion questions for the internal support people

What internal politics or potential pockets of resistance does the evaluation team need to be aware of?

Who do these 'resistant' audiences trust and understand? How can we involve those people in presenting the findings?

Who will design or implement any changes deemed necessary based on insights from the evaluation? How should we involve them early on?

What constitutes 'credible evidence' in the eyes of the main audiences?

How do we ensure the evaluation delivers timely, clear, credible, and well-supported answers to the Key Evaluation Questions?

Early on in the evaluation process, before the evidence is in, ask for a 'skeleton report'. Contribute your inside knowledge of the key audiences to ensure the eventual report(s) will be understandable, useful, and influential.



4(b) Tracking Use and Influence

A crucial part of proactively managing for influence is making sure we keep our fingers on the pulse of **how well the use and influence strategy actually working.**

What we need to find out:

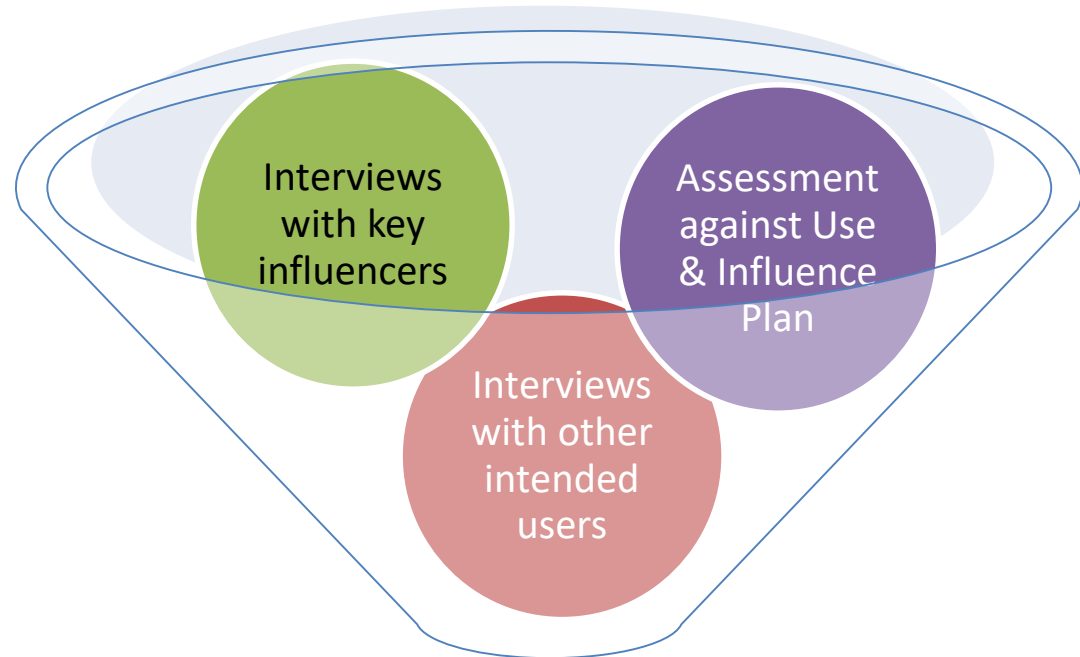
- i. Are the planned use and influence strategies actually happening? Where, where not, and how well?
- ii. Are intended users (and ‘influencees’) aware that the evaluation is taking place? How do they view its validity, credibility, and usefulness to them?
- iii. How – and how effectively – has the evaluation been useful and influential so far?



A mix of evidence to track use and influence

We will answer these questions with a mix of **three different kinds of evidence**.

If we need more information, we can create short surveys and ask more people.



Evidence
Synthesis &
Sensemaking:

*Here's how well we are doing
on use and influence so far.*



A step by step guide to gathering the evidence

First, have each member of the internal [Evaluation Management Team](#) *and* a selection of your [key influencers](#) interview three to five people each using the interview guides on the next few pages.

At the end of each interview, the interviewer completes the “overall” rating for each of the three sets of questions asked, as a high-level summary of what they heard from the person they just interviewed.

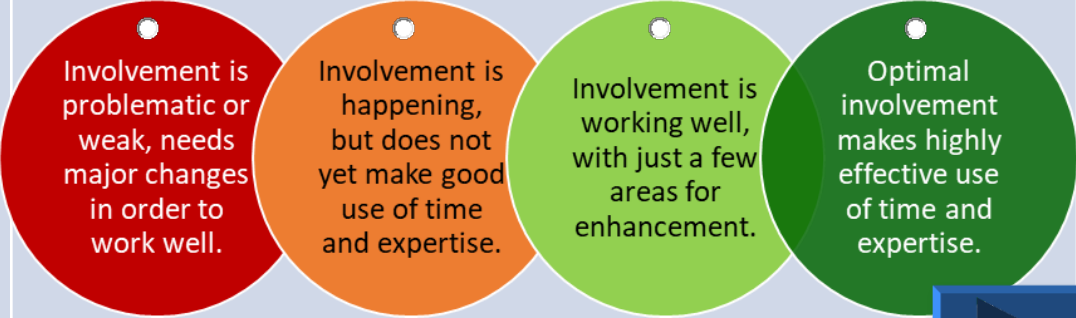
If you need to canvas the views of a wider range of people, construct a small survey as well, using the interview questions as a starting point.

Have someone on the evaluation team work through the [Use and Influence Plan](#) and note which of your influence strategies you believe have been fully implemented, which have been partially implemented, and which not yet.



Key Influencer Interview Part 1: Use & influence strategy implementation

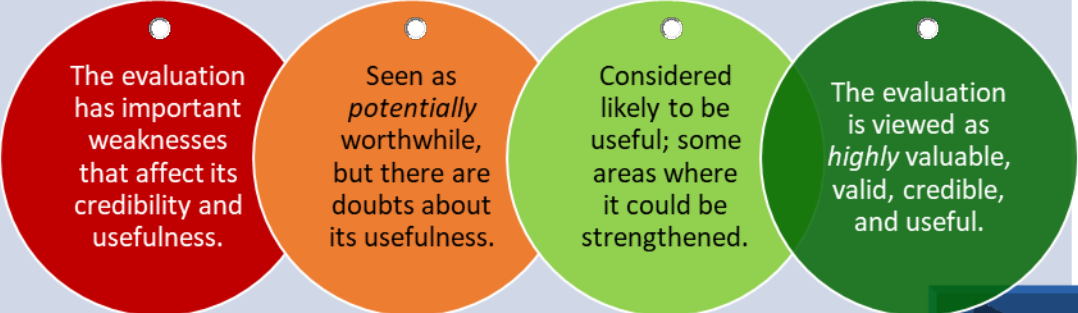
Make brief notes as you speak with each person. Afterwards, take a few minutes to refine your notes. Then select (○) an overall rating to answer the main question. We will collate these later.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AND OVERALL ASSESSMENT
<p>Which parts of the evaluation process have you been directly involved in so far?</p> <p>Do you feel these were the best places to involve you? Why [not]?</p> <p>How effectively do you think the evaluation team has made use of your expertise and time so far?</p> <p>How valuable is it for you to be involved in the evaluation in this way, compared to what you would otherwise be doing with the time?</p> <p>Is there anyone else who <u>should</u> be involved in the evaluation because of their expertise, credibility, influence, or to bring a perspective that is often marginalised but should be heard?</p>	<p><u>Notes:</u></p> <div data-bbox="967 429 1818 808" style="border: 1px solid black; height: 265px; width: 100%;"></div> <p>Overall, how effectively has the evaluation involved <u>this person</u> (and others they know) in the right parts of the evaluation process, in ways that make sense for them and that maximise validity, credibility, use, and influence?</p> <div data-bbox="784 1033 1866 1348"><p>Involvement is problematic or weak, needs major changes in order to work well.</p><p>Involvement is happening, but does not yet make good use of time and expertise.</p><p>Involvement is working well, with just a few areas for enhancement.</p><p>Optimal involvement makes highly effective use of time and expertise.</p></div>



Key Influencer Interview Part 2: How the evaluation is viewed

Make brief notes as you speak with each person. Afterwards, take a few minutes to refine your notes. Then select (○) an overall rating to answer the main question. We will collate these later.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AND OVERALL ASSESSMENT
<p>Is the evaluation focused on the right questions (the things DfID <i>most</i> needs to know), in your view?</p> <p>What should we be asking but aren't?</p> <p>Does the evaluation seem likely to deliver valid, credible, and useful answers to those questions, as far as you can tell?</p> <p>Who do you think will be the evaluation's strongest critics, and what objections will they raise?</p> <p>Is the evaluation in a strong enough position to address those concerns, both in terms of what to say and the credibility of who can say it?</p>	<p><u>Notes:</u></p> <div data-bbox="967 429 1818 853" style="border: 1px solid black; height: 297px; width: 440px;"></div> <p>Overall, <i>how strong is the evaluation's validity, credibility, usefulness, and value in the eyes of <u>this person</u> and other key stakeholders they know?</i></p> <div data-bbox="788 1033 1872 1343"><p>The evaluation has important weaknesses that affect its credibility and usefulness.</p><p>Seen as <i>potentially</i> worthwhile, but there are doubts about its usefulness.</p><p>Considered likely to be useful; some areas where it could be strengthened.</p><p>The evaluation is viewed as <i>highly</i> valuable, valid, credible, and useful.</p></div>



Key Influencer Interview Part 3: Actual use and influence so far

QUESTIONS TO ASK

How have you used insights from the evaluation in your own work, so far? [Not just things the evaluation found out, but also ways of thinking you may have picked up while being involved in the process.]

Have you used anything you have learned from the evaluation to help influence and persuade other people? How well did that work?

Has the evaluation disappointed you in any way? If so, how and why?

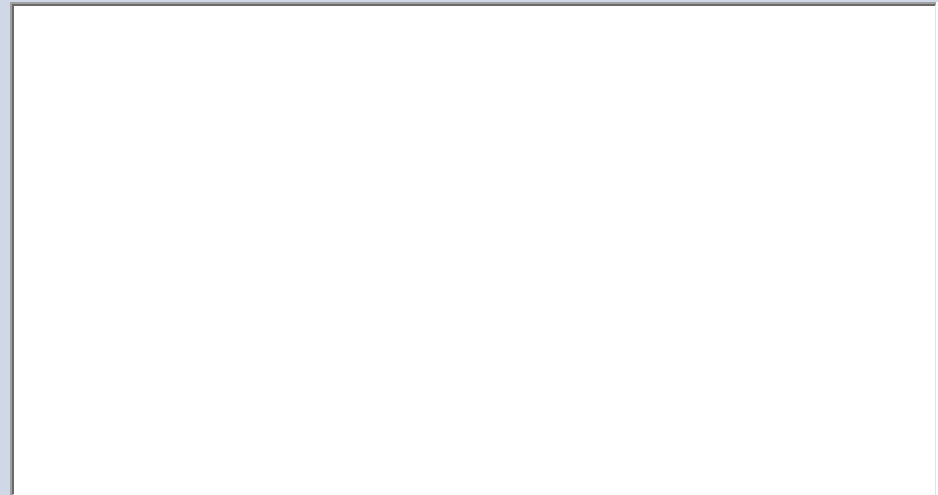
What have other people said to you about how useful (or not) the evaluation is likely to be for them, for DfID, for influencing policy, etc.?

Have you seen any other evidence of a shift in thinking, actions, behaviour, or assumptions that you think this evaluation has contributed to?

How do you know the evaluation had anything to do with these changes?

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AND OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Notes:



Overall, how useful and influential has the evaluation been so far, and how well is it geared for use and influence, according to this person?

This person has seen very little evidence that the evaluation has been used or influential.

This person has seen pockets of use and influence, but not yet at the level needed.

Clear, concrete evidence that this evaluation has been both used and influential.

Clear, strong evidence of extensive and powerful evaluation use and influence.



Other Intended Users Interview Part 1: Use & influence strategy implementation

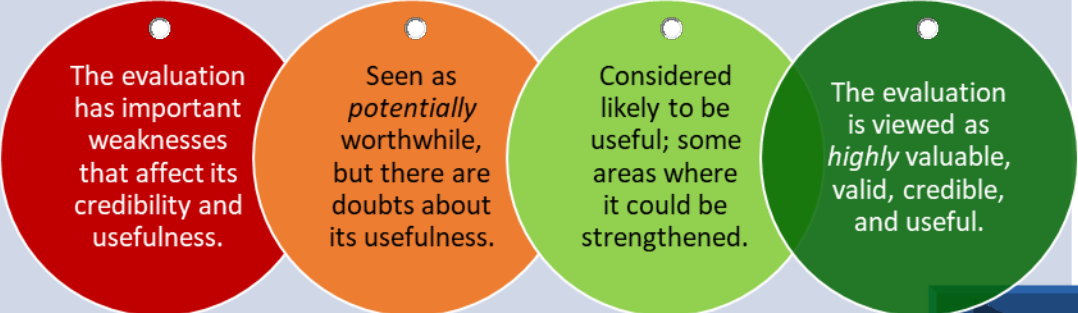
Make brief notes as you speak with each person. Afterwards, take a few minutes to refine your notes. Then select (○) an overall rating to answer the main question. We will collate these later.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AND OVERALL ASSESSMENT
<p>Are you aware that this evaluation is currently under way? If so, when and how did you hear of it?</p> <p>How clearly has the purpose and relevance of the evaluation been communicated and explained to you?</p> <p>Do you know anyone who is directly involved in the evaluation process? What have they shared with you?</p> <p>Do you have any interest in participating in the evaluation design, data gathering, sense making, or report back process yourself?</p> <p>If so, where and how do you think you could both add value to the evaluation and get something valuable from participating?</p> <p>Is there anyone else you can think of who <i>should</i> be involved but isn't?</p>	<p><u>Notes:</u></p> <div data-bbox="966 428 1816 806" style="border: 1px solid black; height: 265px; width: 440px;"></div> <p><i>Overall, how effectively have communications about this evaluation been reaching <u>this person</u> (and those they know), to give them an accurate understanding and opportunities to be involved, if appropriate?</i></p> <div data-bbox="801 1035 1883 1349"><p>Low awareness or understanding of the evaluation; communication needs work.</p><p>Some basic awareness and understanding; better efforts needed to fully inform people.</p><p>Widespread understanding is evident; some potential for enhanced involvement</p><p>Widespread interest in the evaluation; many genuine involvement opportunities.</p></div>



Other Intended Users Interview Part 2: How the evaluation is viewed

Make brief notes as you speak with each person. Afterwards, take a few minutes to refine your notes. Then select (○) an overall rating to answer the main question. We will collate these later.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AND OVERALL ASSESSMENT
<p>Are the people you work with aware that this evaluation is currently in process, and know what it's about?</p> <p>Have you seen any evaluation findings reported, orally or in writing? How clear, relevant, and understandable were they?</p> <p>Does the evaluation seem likely to deliver valid, credible, useful and timely insights, as far as you can tell?</p> <p>What criticisms have you heard about the evaluation? Do they seem valid?</p> <p>What one or two actions would best help increase understanding of the evaluation, its perceived quality, value, credibility, and influence?</p>	<p><u>Notes:</u></p> <div data-bbox="967 429 1818 853" style="border: 1px solid black; height: 297px; width: 440px;"></div> <p>Overall, <i>how strong is the evaluation's validity, credibility, usefulness, and value in the eyes of <u>this person</u> and other key stakeholders they know?</i></p> <div data-bbox="788 1033 1872 1343"><p>The evaluation has important weaknesses that affect its credibility and usefulness.</p><p>Seen as <i>potentially</i> worthwhile, but there are doubts about its usefulness.</p><p>Considered likely to be useful; some areas where it could be strengthened.</p><p>The evaluation is viewed as <i>highly</i> valuable, valid, credible, and useful.</p></div>



Other Intended Users Interview Part 3: Actual use and influence so far

Make brief notes as you speak with each person. Afterwards, take a few minutes to refine your notes. Then select an overall rating to answer the main question. We will collate these later.

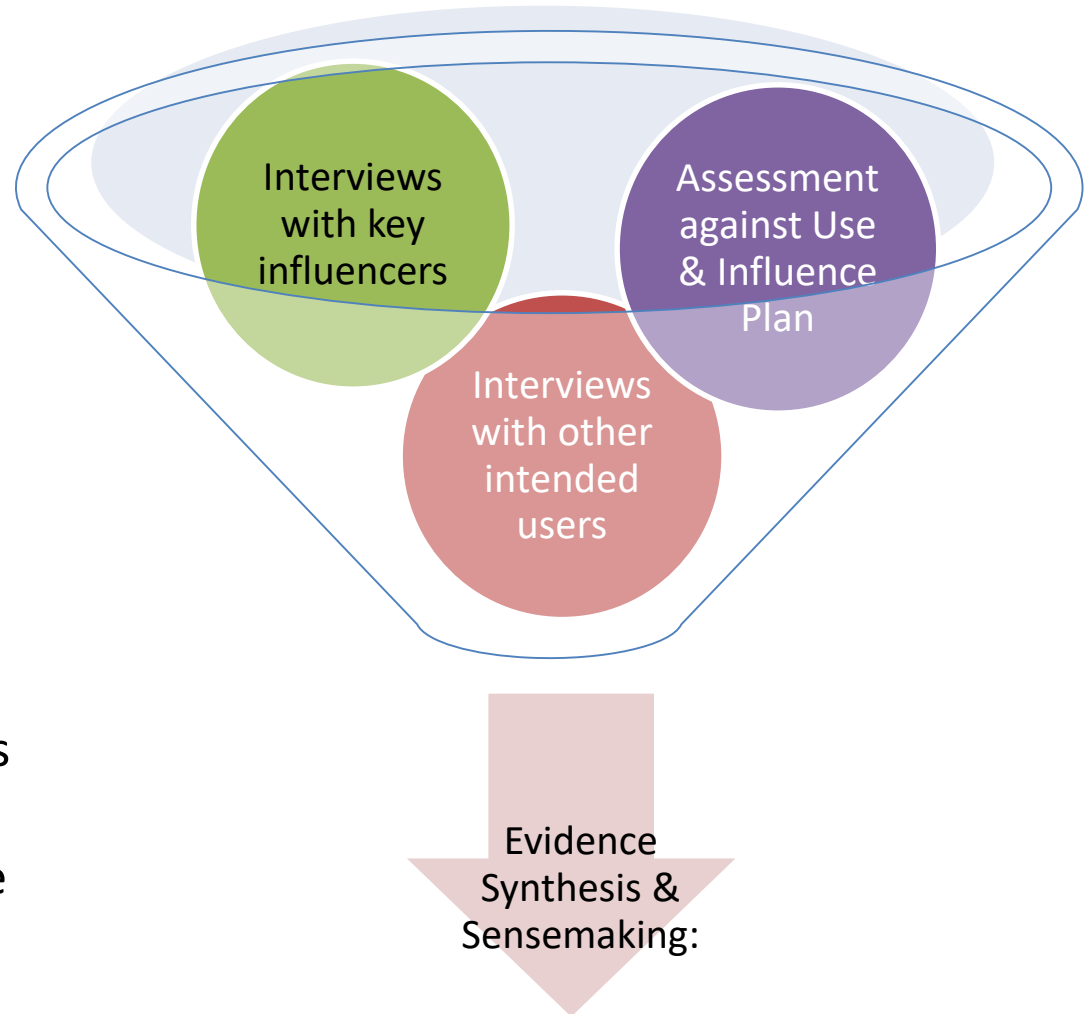
QUESTIONS TO ASK	SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AND OVERALL ASSESSMENT
<p>Have you or your colleagues used insights from the evaluation in your own work, so far? If so, how?</p> <p>Do the learnings from the evaluation usually get to you in time to actually use them? Please explain.</p> <p>What have other people said to you about how useful (or not) the evaluation is likely to be for them, for DfID, for influencing policy, etc.?</p> <p>Have you seen any other evidence of a shift in thinking, actions, behaviour, or assumptions that you think this evaluation has contributed to?</p> <p>How do you know the evaluation had anything to do with these changes?</p>	<p><u>Notes:</u></p> <div data-bbox="904 429 1831 868" style="border: 1px solid black; height: 300px;"></div> <p><i>Overall, how useful and influential has the evaluation been so far, and how well is it geared for use and influence, <u>according to this person?</u></i></p> <div data-bbox="784 1065 1872 1379"><p>This person has seen very little evidence that the evaluation has been used or influential.</p><p>This person has seen pockets of use and influence, but not yet at the level needed.</p><p>Clear, concrete evidence that this evaluation has been both used and influential.</p><p>Clear, strong evidence of extensive and powerful evaluation use and influence.</p></div>



Synthesising the evidence

The next few pages will guide you through the process of bringing together the evidence from all three of these sources.

From there, you'll be able to draw conclusions about how well the use and influence efforts are going so far.



***Here's how well we are doing
on use and influence so far.***



Evidence synthesis:

i. Use & influence strategy implementation

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW EVIDENCE FOR THE QUESTION:

i. Are the planned use & influence strategies actually happening? Where, where not, and how well?

Interview synthesis questions:

How effectively has the evaluation involved key influencers in the right parts of the evaluation process, in ways that make sense for them and that maximise validity, credibility, use, and influence?



How effectively have communications about this evaluation been reaching other intended users (and those they know), to give them an accurate understanding and opportunities to be involved, if appropriate?



Rating Tally:

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Interview Highlights & Insights:

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Up next: Bring in the other evidence as well



Evidence synthesis:

i. Use & influence strategy implementation

Additional Evidence:

Implementation monitoring – review of what’s been done, against the Use and Influence Plan:

Observations and Reflections from the internal management team and the external evaluators:

Overall Assessment:

i. Are the planned use and influence strategies actually happening?

Where, where not, and how well?

Use the interview evidence as well as the evidence on this page

Not really.
A lot of what we intended to do to maximise use hasn't actually been happening.
Very patchy.

Yes, but ...
Most of what we planned is happening to some extent, but not yet to the level we need.

Virtually everything we had planned in order to maximise use and influence is on track and looking good.

Fantastic!! Each part of our plan is being *extremely* well implemented to give us the best possible chance of high use and influence.

Action Points:



Evidence synthesis:

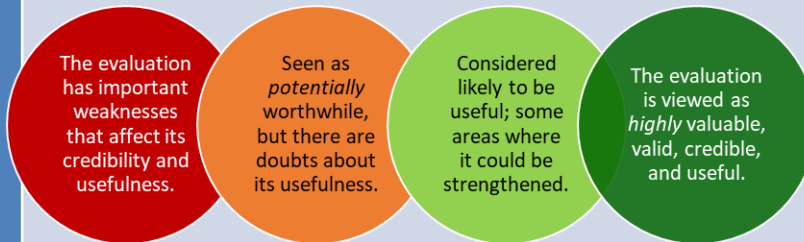
ii. How the evaluation is viewed

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW EVIDENCE FOR THE QUESTION:

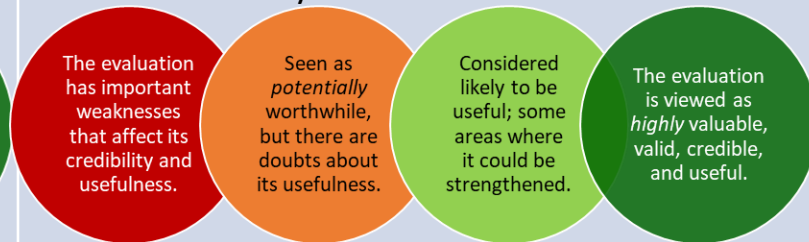
ii. Are intended users aware the evaluation is taking place? How do they view its validity, credibility, usefulness?

Interview synthesis questions:

How strong is the evaluation's validity, credibility, usefulness, and value in the eyes of key influencers (those *directly* involved in the evaluation) and other key stakeholders they know?



How strong is the evaluation's validity, credibility, usefulness, and value in the eyes of other intended users (those not directly involved in the evaluation) and other key stakeholders they know?



Rating Tally:

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Interview Highlights & Insights:

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Up next: Bring in the other evidence as well

Evidence synthesis:

ii. How the evaluation is viewed

Additional Evidence:

Observations and Reflections from the internal management team and the external evaluators:

Other evidence (e.g., informal conversations, other feedback or comments):

Overall Assessment:

ii. Are intended users aware the evaluation is taking place? How do they view its validity, credibility, & usefulness?

Use the interview evidence as well as the evidence on this page

The evaluation has low visibility and/or is widely viewed as having low credibility, validity, and/or usefulness.

The evaluation has some visibility and many view it positively, but we definitely have work to do here.

Intended users/audiences generally see the evaluation as credible, valid, and likely to provide them with useful insights.

The evaluation has generated a lot of positive 'buzz' and a high level of engagement and interest among users/audiences.

Action Points:



Evidence synthesis:

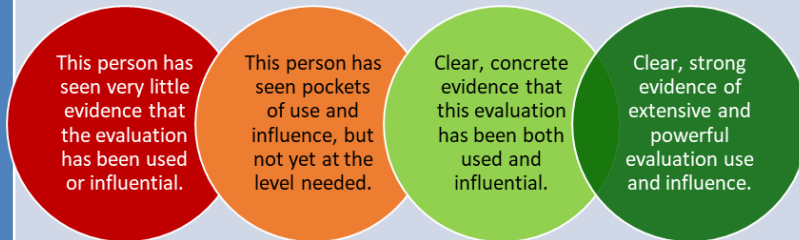
iii. Actual use and influence so far

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW EVIDENCE FOR THE QUESTION:

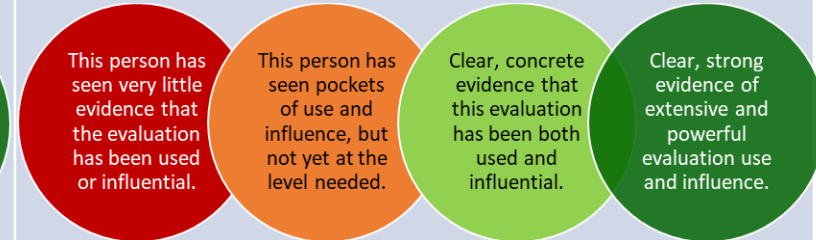
ii. How – and how effectively – has the evaluation been useful and influential so far?

Interview synthesis questions:

How useful and influential has the evaluation been so far, and how well is it geared for use and influence, according to key influencers (those *directly* involved in the evaluation)?



How useful and influential has the evaluation been so far, and how well is it geared for use and influence, according to other intended users we interviewed?



Rating Tally:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Interview Highlights & Insights:

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Up next: Bring in the other evidence as well



Evidence synthesis:

iii. Actual use and influence so far

Additional Evidence:

Observations and Reflections from the internal management team and the external evaluators:

Other evidence (e.g., informal conversations, other feedback or comments):

Overall Assessment:

iii. How – and how effectively – has the evaluation been useful and influential so far??

Use the interview evidence as well as the evidence on this page

The evaluation is either being widely ignored or widely criticized, and has so far generated little positive use or influence.

Some pockets of use and influence are emerging, but certainly less than we had hoped to see at this stage.

Good! Clear evidence that the evaluation is being used in the most important ways, and is influential.

The evaluation and its process are powerfully influential in ways that have taken things to a whole new level.

Action Points:

