

Hiring an External Evaluator

Evaluation webinar handout

Introduction

- This is the handout relates to the 'hiring an external evaluator' webinar and will cover the following:
 - How to decide who should be doing the evaluation.
 - How to choose an external evaluator.
 - How to write a research specification.

Who should do the evaluation?

- In some situations, you might need the help of an external evaluator or evaluation team to evaluate your project.
- If you do not have any evaluation experts in house, you might think about whether an external evaluator could carry out the evaluation of your project for you.
- There are several things to consider:
 - **Cost**- you need a big enough budget to afford an external evaluator!
 - **Time**- you might need to hire an external evaluator if you do not have the time to carry out your evaluation in house.
 - **Complexity**- sometimes the kind of evaluation you need is far too complex to carry out in house.
 - **Bias**- would your evaluation be biased if you carried it out in house?

If you decide to hire an external evaluator...

- Think about who should act as your external evaluator. An external evaluator could be someone who works for a research company, a university or another member of staff who has not been involved in the intervention.
- When choosing an evaluator, you might decide to ask more than one evaluator to provide a proposal. If this is the case, you will need to decide how you will assess all of the proposals you receive.
- You will also need to consider the balance between quality and price. If you work for a local authority, consider talking to the team who deals with tendering as they will be able to advise you on how to weight your research specification.

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Which external evaluator should I choose?

- Along with the research proposals you will receive from different evaluators, consider:
 - **Evaluation experience and expertise**- it is ideal to look for an evaluator who has experience in evaluating similar interventions to yours, and experience of carrying out the methods you would like to use in your evaluation e.g. focus groups.
 - **Quantitative and qualitative research skills**
 - **Knowledge of the context of your project**
 - **Cultural and contextual competency**
- Before you hire someone...
 - Do your homework by looking at the evaluator's past work. Is the evaluator capable of carrying out the evaluation you need?
 - It is also important to contact an evaluator as early as possible, as good evaluators are likely to be busy.
 - Speak to colleagues, as they might be able to recommend external evaluator.

What should I include in my research specification?

- You could use the following headings to structure your research specification:
 - **Project title**
 - **Summary**- describe who is commissioning the work, what you want to be evaluated and the timescale in which the evaluation should be completed.
 - **Introduction**- introduce your project and the reason it needs to be evaluated.
 - **Aims and objectives**- outline the aims and objectives of your project clearly to allow the evaluator to choose an effective method to evaluate your project.
 - **Methodology**- outline methods to be used, if you have an idea of the methodology you would like the evaluator to use. However, you can also leave it open for evaluators to recommend their own recommended methodology.
 - **Analysis and reporting**- specify if there are any particular analyses required and the requirements of your report.
 - **Timeline**
 - **Budget**

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- **Quality assurances**- outline any quality assurances. For example, you might not like to use an evaluator with less than three years experience.
- **Data protection policies**- should be outlined. If you don't know what these are, speak to someone in HR who will be able to tell you the minimum data protection requirements of your organisation.
- **Evaluation criteria**- explain how you are going to evaluate each proposal. You might break this down into a table to make it easy to understand. For example:

Expertise	20%
Work plan	30%
Cost	30%
Quality Assurance	10%
Understanding of the research objectives	10%

Summary

- This handout has covered:
 - How to decide who should be doing the evaluation.
 - How to choose an external evaluator.
 - How to write a research specification.

Contact details

If you have any further questions about the evaluation process, please email: rneedham@rospa.com