

Writing your Report

Evaluation webinar handout

Introduction

- This handout relates to the 'Writing your Report' webinar and covers the following:
 - Tips for writing your report
 - An example of a general report structure
 - Advice on what to do after you have completed your report
 - The benefits of publishing your report

Report writing tips

- Once you have completed your evaluation project, you will need to write up your findings in a report.

Tips for staying organised

- Don't just set one deadline for completing the report. It is useful to set yourself deadlines for each section to make the report seem a more manageable task.
- Start writing the introduction of your report while your evaluation project is in draft form.
- Start writing your methodology section while you are doing the evaluation.
- Don't leave all of your referencing until the end! It can become very confusing if you don't do it as you go along.
- Make sure you factor in time for you, your team and stakeholders to review a draft of the report before the final deadline.

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- Keep your computer well organised. It is useful to have a 'previous versions' folder where you can keep previous versions of sections of your report. This can be really helpful to anyone who joins the project later.
- Think about the kind of report you would like to produce and the places you would like to publish it while you are planning your evaluation. It is easy to leave it until the end and then realise you have run out of time and money.

Tips for writing style and format

- Use simple and concise sentences.
- Write in plain English! It is best to avoid using too many jargon terms and acronyms, as these might be hard to understand for some of your audience.
- Use headings to make your report easy to navigate.
- Give tables and graphs a number. These should be clear enough for people to understand without a lengthy description.
- You will also need to maintain a clear referencing style throughout the report. There are some tools you can use to generate references, such as online reference generators or the referencing function in Microsoft Word.
- Don't assume any appendix will be read. If the report doesn't make any sense without it; it should be included in the main body of your report.

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Referencing format

Referencing a book:

Author, Initials (Year) *Title of Book in Italics*, edition number, Place of publication: Publisher

Referencing a journal article:

Author, Initials (Year) 'Title of Journal article,' *Name of the Journal in italics*, Volume number: Page numbers

Referencing a web page:

Author or Authoring Organisation (Year published or last updated) 'Title of web page', URL, Date accessed: Date

Considering your audience/purpose

- The style and content of your report is likely to be influenced by the audience of your report. This audience could include:
 - **Senior management and elected members**- this audience are likely to want evidence of how effective your intervention was, and information to help them determine whether funding was well spent on this project.
 - **External parties and stakeholders**- such as community groups and the police. These parties are likely to be interested in what effects their contribution to the project had.
 - **Other road safety bodies**- this audience are likely to want to know if what you did had a positive or negative effect. Your report could also contribute to their evidence base if they are planning an intervention.
 - **Your colleagues**- will most likely use your report to help them plan future interventions.

What should I include in my report?

- If this is the first evaluation report you have written, you might like to use the e-valu-it toolkit to help you write your report. The toolkit has an interactive questionnaire, which consists of a number of questions about your intervention and your plans for evaluation. Once you have answered the questionnaire, the toolkit will generate an automatic report template for you based on your responses to the questions, which can be helpful if you are unsure where to start.
- If you would like to write your report without the toolkit, include the following sections:
 - **Executive summary (optional)**- this section is recommended if your report is particularly lengthy. This should summarise the main findings of your report and should be no longer than two sides of A4, split into headings for readability.
 - **Introduction**- in this section you should introduce the road safety issue your intervention aims to address, and detail the intervention that took place and who it was aimed at. You should also include any evidence you have used to back up the approach you have taken to delivering your intervention and the aims and objectives of your project.
 - **Methodology**- explain how the evaluation was conducted, including the methods you used and the purpose of the evaluation. There should also be some description of how the data was analysed.
 - **Results**- this section should describe what you have found. If you collected quantitative data, your findings should be reported in tables and graphs. If you collected qualitative data, you should use a selection of quotes to illustrate the themes of your data.
 - **Discussion (optional)**- discuss and interpret the results of your evaluation in more depth.
 - **Conclusions**- provide an overall summary of your results, discussing whether you have met your objectives. You should also state what your results mean in the wider context of the road safety issue you are addressing.
 - **Recommendations**- in this section, write down what you think should be done on the basis of what you have found. If you did not meet your objectives, consider how you can ensure that they could be met in future. Even if you did meet your objectives, your recommendations can be based upon further improvements to your intervention. It is important to note that this section of the report can also be used to recommend changes in policy if your findings suggest that this is appropriate.

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Review and feedback

- The whole point of an evaluation is to see how something is working and the ways in which you can improve it.
- Instead of filing the report on a shelf, you should meet with those who deliver the intervention to discuss whether the recommendations of the report can be implemented.

Publish the report

- The final step of the evaluation process is publishing your report. You can publish your report on several websites, including <http://www.roadsafetyevaluation.com/> (you can publish your report publicly or privately) and <http://www.roadsafetyobservatory.com/>. However, it is important to note that you must agree your report with those who have taken part and stakeholders before publishing your report.
- If your evaluation has revealed that your intervention is not having a positive effect, you might not really feel like publishing the report. However, it is important that you do because it could help other road safety practitioners to avoid re-inventing the wheel!
- You should also consider providing feedback to those who have taken part in the evaluation, as these people have given their time and are likely to be interested in the outcome of your evaluation.
- Once your report has been published, you could consider promoting it in a press release or at a conference.

Summary

- This handout has covered:
 - Tips for writing your report
 - A general structure you can use to write your report
 - Advice on the review and feedback stage
 - The benefits of publishing your report

Contact details

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