

Glossary of terms: monitoring and evaluation



Accountability: the process of providing information to stakeholders that make them feel confident about how the organisation is being managed and how services are delivered to service users.

Aims: the changes the organisation plans to achieve, or the differences it wants to make.

Baseline: a point at which something is recorded with the specific intention of using it to compare against some future position, usually to demonstrate that change has been achieved.

Beneficiaries: the group of people identified in an organisation's objects as the users, clients or members who will benefit from the activities of that organisation.

Continuous improvement: this refers to continuously seeking and implementing ways of being better at what you do. It is about always striving for the best. It is not enough for an organisation to have a 'project' on quality. For the work to have an effect, organisations need to continue to keep on top of quality, both in terms of the services they deliver and the way they are managed and governed.

Evaluation: assessing progress against the stated aims, objectives, outputs and outcomes of the project. Often evaluation activities are left until the end of a Project, but they should be planned in from the start.

Impact: the broad, longer-term effects of the project's work.

Mission statement: a short statement of the purpose of the organisation, sometimes called an overall aim.

Monitoring: the process of gathering and recording information on a regular basis, it keeps account of progress and work undertaken against the agreed aims and objectives of your project. You monitor progress by gathering information on your performance indicators and targets.

Objectives: the practical steps the organisation will take to accomplish its aims. To be effective, objectives should always be written so that they are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Relevant, Time-bound). Too often at least one of these elements is left out! The Project should produce at least one Deliverable (or output) in support of each objective (otherwise, how are you going to achieve it?)

Outcomes: the changes that happen because of your project. Outcomes can happen at many levels - most evaluation is concerned with the outcomes for service users/clients/beneficiaries.

Outputs: the services, activities and products that you deliver to achieve your objectives. Outputs are derived from your objectives. Your objective might be 'to provide support to clients', outputs may include 'group support sessions' and 'leaflets'.

Partners: individuals or organisations who works with you towards achieving the goals of your work/project. Partners are stakeholders.

Partnership: the relationship between two or more parties creating added value for the beneficiaries.

Performance indicators: the signs to show that your project is making progress towards your outputs and outcomes. Performance indicators can be quantitative and qualitative. They help you to set targets to work towards. They make it clear to a funder what you will do to achieve success in your project and what you will report on. You will use your performance indicators to monitor the progress and success of your project.

Quality: the extent to which a service or product meets the expectations of the stakeholders. Quality is about excellence in service delivery and in how the organisation is run.

Qualitative data: Qualitative data is extremely varied in nature. It includes virtually any information that can be captured that is not numerical in nature.

Qualitative methods: ways of collecting data that is concerned with describing meaning, rather than with drawing statistical inferences. What qualitative methods (e.g. case studies and interviews) lose on reliability they gain in terms of validity. They provide a more in depth and rich description.

Quantitative: data capable of being counted or having a number attached to it.

Stakeholders: a stakeholder is any person or organisation who has an interest in the progress or outcomes of your work, usually because they are either part of it or affected by what it delivers. Stakeholders influence products, services and programmes of work. Stakeholders can have a negative as well as positive interest in the work.

Targets: describes what your organisation hopes to achieve in terms of its outputs and outcomes. Alan Lawrie describes targets as '... policy commitments or pledges to improve performance to a particular level.' (1995).

Total Quality Management (TQM): is a structured system for satisfying service users and suppliers by making the management of quality a strategic concern and by encouraging a culture of learning and improvement. TQM is about ensuring excellence in everything you do and in everything you are about. Quality is not just about implementing a framework or working towards a set standard, it should be evident in everything that the organisation does and the way it is done.

Values: the statements that explain the behaviours and ethos that are important to an organisation e.g. trust, openness, equality.