Using the a-e-I-o-u Worksheet

A separate worksheet is provided as a guide to organize your evaluation questions. It is helpful to complete this worksheet during the early stages of the project. It will provide a valuable resource for collecting and reporting evaluation data. First, determine the key evaluation questions for each of the five areas. Then identify the type of information needed, appropriate sources of that information, methods of collecting the data, and a time line for collecting the data.

Specific evaluation questions should relate to the goals, objectives, and activities of your project/partnership. The type of information is what information will answer the question. The data source is who will provide the information. The method of collecting data identifies how the information will be collected, and the timing of the data collection tells when.

Framework for Final Evaluation Report

Introduction

Briefly describe the project, including background information that is important to understanding the project. Also include a description of project goals, objectives, activities, and key personnel.

a-e-I-o-u Format

Devote a separate section to each area. Describe how the data were collected and provide information to support answers to the specific evaluation questions.

Conclusions

Identify goals and objectives that have successfully been achieved. Provide data to support institutional change as a result of the project. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the project. Include recommendations that would be helpful for others conducting similar projects, as well as your recommendation for project/partnership continuation.

We wish you success in completing your project or partnership and achieving your goals and objectives. If you have any questions about the evaluation component of your project, or would like an example of a project/partnership evaluation report, please contact us.

Evaluation is an integral part of every project/partnership. Evaluation is useful in the decision making process by providing an understanding of what has or has not been successful and why. It can help identify what should be changed in continuing projects, as well as point out strengths that could contribute to the success of future projects. Evaluation of the projects and partnerships provides VISION 2020 staff, your project/partnership team, and other audiences with a deeper understanding of project goals, objectives, activities, and results.

Since all project and partnership evaluations will be consolidated into the overall VISION 2020 evaluation report, these evaluations must follow a specified format, the a-e-I-o-u approach. A brief explanation this approach, suggestions for using the a-e-I-o-u worksheet, and a sample framework for your final evaluation report follow.
The a-e-l-o-u approach provides a simple way of organizing key evaluation questions and allows for many models of evaluation methods. Within the a-e-l-o-u approach, evaluation questions are organized into five areas: (a)accountability, (e)ffectiveness, (i)mpromptu, (o)rganizational context, and (u)nanticipated outcomes. Questions related to the first three, accountability, effectiveness, and impact, are particularly important and are key in determining the success of your project/partnership. Questions related to organizational context and unanticipated outcomes can provide additional evaluative information about the context and effect of your project/partnership. A detailed explanation of the areas follows. The questions and their answers form the basis of the evaluation report.

**Accountability:** Did the project/partnership team do what it said it was going to do?
Accountability focuses on determining whether activities related to the goals and objectives of the project were completed. For example, if one of the activities was a conference, questions related to accountability might include (but not be limited to):
- Was the conference held?
- Who attended?
- What was the conference agenda?

Given these questions, the types of information needed might include dates, times, and location of the conference; number of participants and demographic information about them; and a listing and/or summary of conference activities.

Accountability information is often available in existing project records such as registration materials. A survey might also be used to collect information from participants.

**Effectiveness:** How well did the activities meet the objectives of the project/partnership?
Effectiveness addresses how well objectives were accomplished and focuses on attitudes, opinions, and knowledge. Continuing with the conference example, questions might include:
- What were participants' reactions to the conference activities?
- How applicable were the conference activities to the participants' classrooms or businesses?
Participants' reactions and opinions provide information related to effectiveness. Data could be collected from the participants by survey or focus group.

**Impact:** What changes have occurred as a result of the project/partnership?
Impact focuses on identifying and assessing changes that result from project/partnership activities. These changes are generally tied to the stated outcomes of the project or partnership. Impact questions are often designed to identify changes in the attitudes or behavior of individuals, groups, or systems. Since the impact of your project/partnership on bringing about institutional change is of key importance to VISION 2020, that should be the focus of this area. If the conference in the previous examples addressed innovative teaching, impact questions might include:
- What new teaching methods have you tried as a result of the conference?
- What changes have you made in the curriculum?
- What changes in policy have occurred?

Descriptions or observations of actions or changes would answer these questions. Sources could be participants, project personnel, and/or the participants' students or clients. Methods of data collection could include follow-up surveys, focus groups, and observations. Often, baseline data and follow-up data are required in order to make the comparisons to determine change.

**Organizational Context:** What structures, policies, or events helped or hindered the project/partnership in accomplishing its goals?
Organizational context questions focus on identifying contextual factors, policies, or events that contribute to or detract from achieving goals and objectives. Questions may include:
- What helped to achieve project goals and objectives?
- What made it difficult to achieve project goals and objectives?

Data are often collected through interviews of key personnel, focus groups made up of those most affected by the project, or document analysis.

**Unanticipated Outcomes:** What happened that you did not plan or expect?
Sometimes, things happen or change as a result of the project that were not planned or anticipated. This component looks at those unplanned positive or negative changes. Useful methods of collecting data for this component are focus groups, interviews, informal communications, and observations.