

# M&E Guidelines

*The M&E guidelines are intended to complement tailored coaching support provided through AM Qattan Foundation's Visual Arts: A Flourishing Field (VAFF) program, funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).*

## **What is monitoring?**

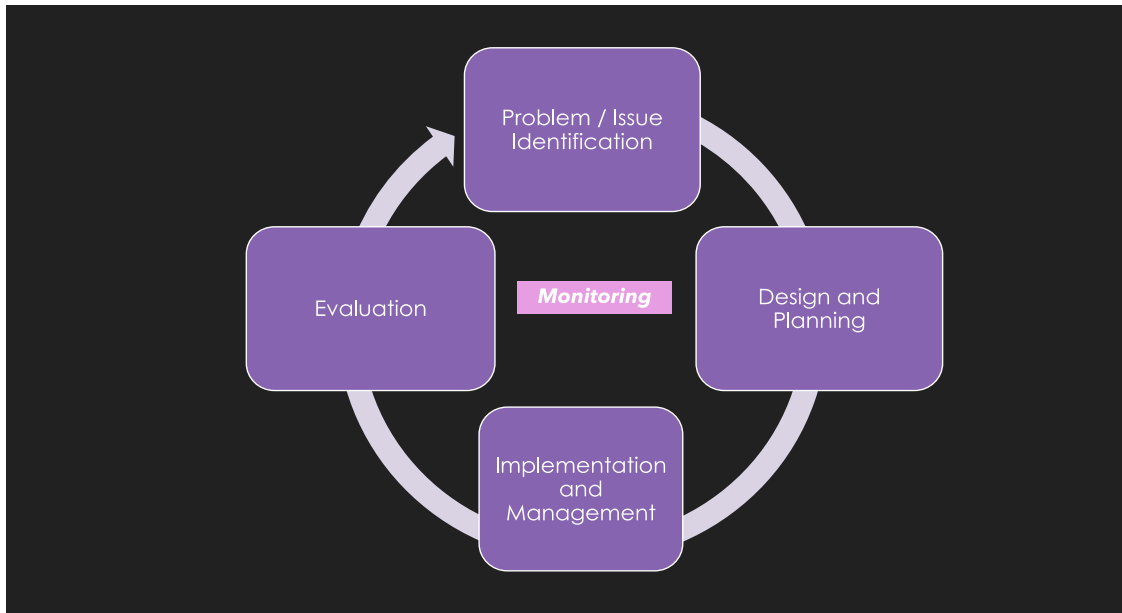
Monitoring is the systematic and continuous process of collecting and using information throughout the program cycle for the purpose of management, decision-making, and learning. It is the routine process of data collection intended to measure whether the program is doing and achieving what it set out to do.

## **What is evaluation?**

Evaluation is a time-bound exercise to assess, systematically and objectively, the relevance, performance and success, or lack thereof, of on-going and completed programs and projects.

<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Ongoing /Continuous process	Periodic (mid-term &/or at end of the project)
To see if we are on track	To find out if we have achieved our objectives
To make changes before it is too late	To look at how we achieved them
To find out if we are doing the work we planned	To find out if we have made any impact
To help look for areas for improvements, including training during project period	To find out if the project has been relevant, efficient and effective and sustainable
Looks at inputs, processes, and outputs	Assesses outcomes and impact
It is easier to evaluate a project if there has been a good monitoring system	
M&E is a "continual learning process rather than a single information gathering exercise."	
To be most effective, M&E should be planned at the design stage.	
M&E is a way to hold yourself accountable to donors, constituents, and beneficiaries.	

**M&E is an essential part of program/project cycle management.**



### **Why is M&E important? Because it..**

- Provides objective evidence to inform decision making.
- Ensures the most effective and efficient use of resources.
- Objectively assesses the extent to which a program is having or has had the desired impact, in what areas it is effective, and where corrections need to be considered.
- Produces information that can help convince donors that their investments have been worthwhile, whether it sound be replicated, or whether alternative approaches should be considered.
- Is a way of holding organizations accountable.

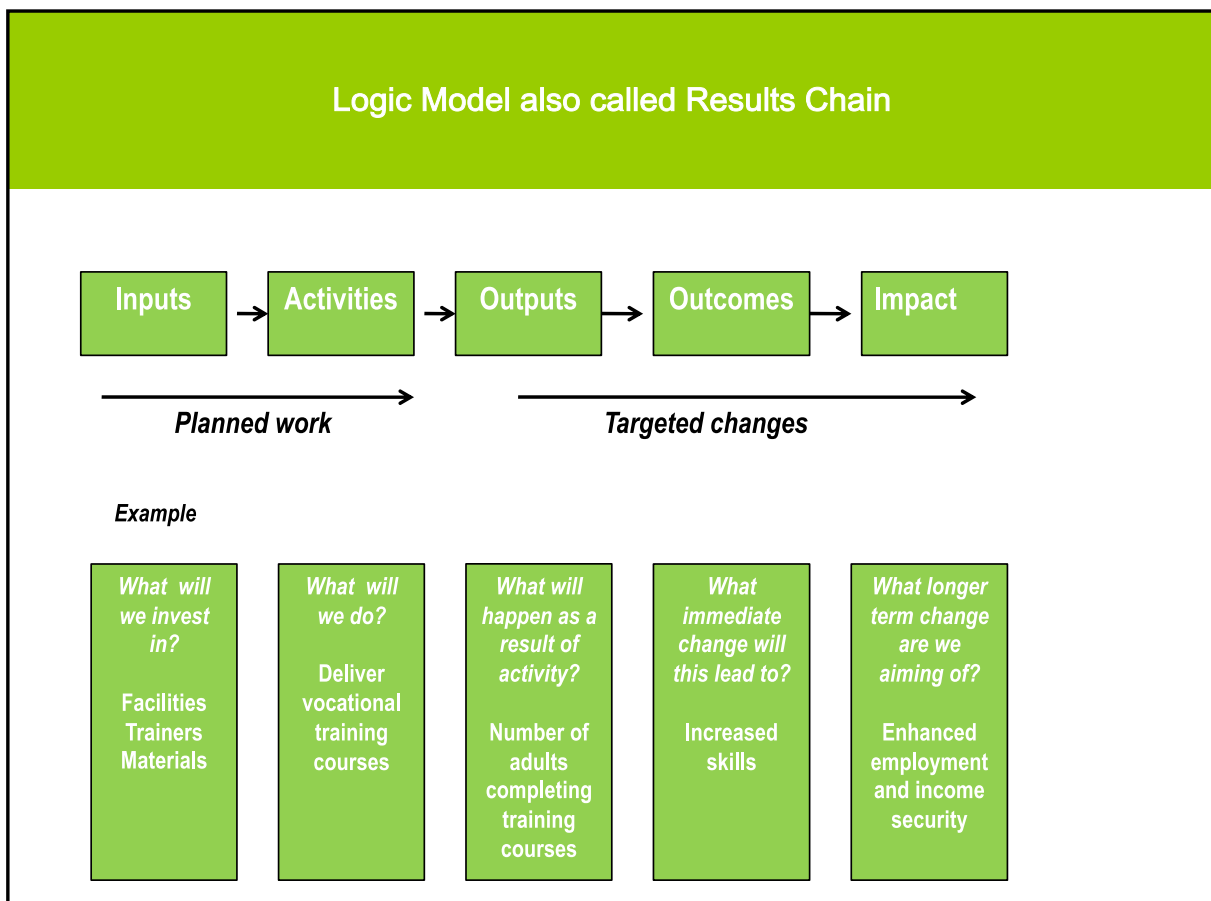
### **What is M&E all about?**

M&E is all about CLARITY... it helps you to make sure you are clear about:

- Where are you going?
- How will you get there?
- What will tell you that you are going in the right direction?
- What will tell you that you have arrived?

# Key Step to M&E – having a clear project design

**M&E is heavily dependent on good planning.** In other words, it can be very difficult to monitor and evaluate a project that has not been properly planned to start with. In order to know what we should monitor and evaluate, we need to develop a clear **LOGICAL and SMART project design**. During the planning stage, it is important to be clear about it is it the project is setting out to accomplish. Clarity is needed in particular about: (i) what activities will be carried out as part of the development intervention; (ii) what it is hoped will change as a result; and (iii) why that change is important. Logic model (also referred to as Results Chain) is one model to promote logical programmatic design.



**Another model is the Logical Framework** (*only look at intervention logic at this stage*)

# Logical Framework

	<i>Intervention Logic</i>	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Source of Verification	Assumptions
Overall Objective				
Project Purpose				
Results				
Activities				

## Glossary

- Goals (also referred to as ‘Global Objectives’ or ‘Impact’) are very broad results that are seen at a population level. They usually require more than one program & actor to achieve; our program will contribute to these.
- ‘Specific Objectives’ (also referred to as ‘Project Purpose’) are the results of our program that contribute to the goal. They are specific to our program.
- Inputs are the raw materials you need to conduct our activities, such as money, staff, materials, guidelines, or equipment.
- Activities are the work that we do.
- Outputs are the immediate results of our activities, the proof that our activities happened. Often they are expressed as a number or amount. They are also sometimes referred to as ‘deliverables’.
- Outputs lead to outcomes, which are the “effects” of our activities, or what happens as a result of our activities. Outcomes (also referred to as ‘Results’) can be short-, medium-

, or long-term effects. They refer to changes at the individual level (i.e. changes in behaviors, attitudes, knowledge) or changes at systems level (improved quality/coverage of service delivery for instance)

- Impact is measured at a broader scale and requires data beyond the scope of our project. The difference between outcomes and impact is how confident we are that the changes are a direct result of our activities and not the result of other factors.

## WHAT ARE INDICATORS?

Indicators are what we use to measure our project – to tell us if we are going in the right direction and whether we have arrived.

Getting the indicators right, from the start, is key to being able to monitor and evaluate your program. An indicator is a *'quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure change'*. Indicators are signs, makers or evidence of our activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact. They “indicate” that something has happened and show changes or progress a program is making.

One way of identifying indicators to is to focus on M&E questions that need to be asked, for example: “What do we expect to change by the end of this program?” “What do we want to know at the end of this program?” “What would success look like?”. These questions should help you to define the quantitative or qualitative variable by which achievement can be judged.

### **Selecting Indicators: What should indicators look like?**

Indicators can be developed for each of your key activity, output, outcome and impact. It is important to keep in mind that you SHOULD NOT try to measure everything. You should not have too many indicators and you should be smart about selecting your indicators. If you have too many indicators, you will spend all your time, efforts, and a considerable chunk of money trying to track your indicators. In other words, indicators should be cost effective and not resource intensive.

Indicators ideally should be:

- Logically linked to objectives and in line with project logic
- Able to capture the anticipated change
- Manageable, easy to measure, hence SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timebound)
- Easy to understand
- Developed or agreed upon with stakeholders
- A mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators
- Objectively verifiable so that different persons using the same measuring process independently of one another obtain the same measurements

When selecting your indicators take, ask yourself these questions:

- Will you be able to collect information on your indicator?
- If so, where will you get the information from? Is it likely to be credible source?

- How much will it cost to get the information in terms of: staff time? beneficiary time? money?
- How often will you have to collect it? Does it require baseline information? If so, can you get this information?
- Do your staff have the capacity (and desire!) to collect the information honestly and accurately?
- How far can you attribute the indicator to your efforts?
- Will the indicator tell you anything you did not know before?
- Will it help you make decisions to improve future performance?

### **A look at qualitative and quantitative indicators**

There are a number of different types of indicators. One key difference is between quantitative (reported as numbers, such as units, proportions, ratios, percentages...)

and qualitative indicators (reported as words, in statements, paragraphs...)

As 'purely' qualitative indicators run the risk of being considered anecdotal, practitioners often combine quantitative 'objective' indicators with qualitative 'subjective' indicators to measure changes in ways of thinking or perceptions or appreciation for example. This is done for instance through using scoring and ranking (such as rating satisfaction of services offered for instance from 1 to 10 or ranking satisfaction according to predefined categories such as 'very satisfied', 'satisfied', and 'unsatisfied' using questionnaires). Likewise, qualitative indicators (numbers and percentages for instance) can be combined with 'subjective indicators' (perceptions on changes) – for instance 'number of participants that (self-) report changes in their perceptions on the value of art education'.

### **Differences between indicators and targets**

Until recently, quantitative indicators were formulated inclusive of numbers i.e. '50 participants trained in M&E by the end of 2019' and '80% of trained participants have developed their M&E skills by the end of 2019' are examples of indicators with numbers. Recently, however, more and more organizations are differentiating between indicators and targets. In this case, indicators are formulated as 'neutral' evidence of change that do not contain specific numbers (and some also do not include words such as 'increase' or 'reduction') while targets are numeric changes that are targeted. In the case of examples provided above, indicators would be # of participants trained (target 50) and % of trained participants with enhanced skills (target 80%). Baseline is the starting point i.e. what the situation is like before the specific intervention is implemented. For instance, if the indicator is the average number of exhibitions that targeted artists are invited to participate in, the baseline would be how many exhibitions targeted artists were engaged in before our intervention and the target would be how many we would like to see them engaged in by the end of our intervention.

**What should we do once we have identified our indicators?**

Once indicators have been selected, the next step is to ‘operationalize’ them by collecting data for every single one of the selected indicators.. Planning for data collection involves thinking through who will collect them, when, how often and which tools or methodologies will be used and how will we ensure good quality data.

To help make sure that we are actually ‘operationalizing’ the indicators, it is helpful to develop a **M&E Action Plan** (sometimes also simply called ‘M&E Plan’). The M&E Plan basically describes

- Where do we get the data from?
- When should we collect data (how often)?
- What tools will we use to collect data?
- Who will be responsible for collecting, analyzing and using the data?

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Data collection Methods</b>	<b>Timing &amp; Frequency</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<i>What to measure to evaluate progress towards achieving impact, outcome and outputs</i>	<i>The targeted change in indicator</i>	<i>The starting point – i.e. what the situation is like before we start</i>	<i>Where will the data come from? How will it be collected?</i>	<i>When will data be collected? How often will the data be collected?</i>	<i>Who will capture the data? Who will analyze the data? Who will report on the data?</i>

**What are different data collection methods?**

There are a wide variety of data collection methods, including:

- Focus group discussions
- Household surveys
- Participant registration form
- Key informant interviews
- Direct observation
- Pre and post testing
- Questionnaires
- Case studies
- Stories on Most Significant Change
- Activity Logs

Which you will choose depends on the types of questions they seek to answer and what information you are trying to verify. Participant list can be useful if you are just seeking



verification of the number of women and men that have participated in a training course, while pre and post testing would be useful to verify if there have been changes in knowledge of participants regarding training subject.

Some of these data collection methods are better suited for qualitative data (for instance focus group discussions and stories on most significant change), while others (such as questionnaires and surveys) are better suited for quantitative data. The advantages of qualitative methods such as focus group discussions and Most Significant Change are that they can capture intangible changes. The drawback is that analysis of the narrative information is very time-consuming and cannot always be used to draw hard conclusions. In general, while numbers (collected through surveys for instance) can provide a concrete and clear picture of improvement, stories and examples can often give meaning to these figures. Ideally, thus a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used, as they provide different perspectives, have different advantages and allow cross-checking (triangulation) of information.

### **Who should collect data?**

Almost everyone in the program will be involved in some way in collecting M&E information that can be used.

Make sure to provide the designated person with necessary tools.

*If for example, field worker is to collect information on women's participation, structure his/her reporting format so that he/she has to comment on this, for example, backing up direct observation with case studies. If you want to know how many men and women attend a meeting, include a gender column on your attendance list that the field worker is responsible for. If you have an indicator around financial sustainability of an organization, make sure the report the organization prepares includes this indicator and make sure your Finance Officer includes this in his/her monitoring visit to the field.*

It is also important to note that sometimes the persons responsible for collecting the data are not the same as the persons responsible for analyzing the data or using them. For instance, a volunteer may be tasked to collect data (how many people participate in an event) while a program coordinator may be tasked to analyze the data (have we achieved the targeted numbers? Are the actual numbers more or less than we targeted? Why? And what does this indicate or shed light on?).

### **When should we collect data?**

Frequency refers to how often the data should be collected (for example, annually, biannually, quarterly or monthly). Timing refers to exactly when to collect data

Data collection should be frequent enough to provide the information needed to identify and correct problems but not so frequent that the burden outweighs the benefits and not enough time is available to analyze and actually use the data.

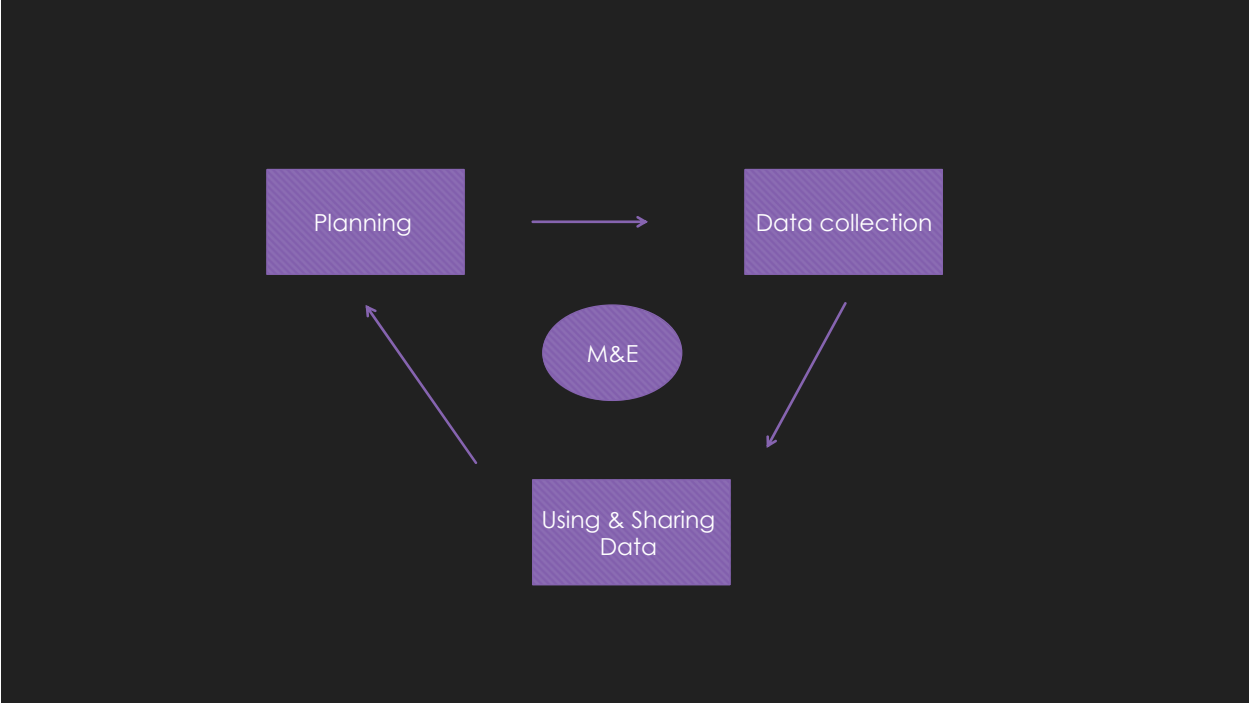
### **What do we do once we have monitoring data?**

**Unless data are used they add no value to your work.** There is no point in collecting data if the data is not used! 'Using data' means critically reflecting on the data we collected (to learn, to adjust, to share). You therefore need to create regular opportunities to analyze and review data and reflect on what the information is telling you about your work, and what you need to do differently. M&E data is thus linked to learning and decision-making.

**What do we mean by using data?** M&E data can be used 'internally' and 'externally'. It can be used 'internally' by helping the program team to see whether they are on track and to draw lessons and make decisions on whether to make adjustments (i.e. change how we are doing things to improve performance and impact). For internal purposes, M&E data can be presented in the form of internal reports or presentations during team meetings for example. M&E can also be used 'externally' i.e. with persons outside of the program team, including those immediately linked to the program (beneficiaries, donors) as well as broader stakeholders. For the latter, you need to be clear about (i) who are the people or types of people that you'll want to tell the story of your program (your M&E data) to (2) what do we want them to know, including for instance why our work is important and what we have accomplished (ii) how you will do this, i.e. how you will present your M&E data. Data can be presented to external audiences in the form of reports; stories; infographics; presentations...

To summarize; the basic steps of M&E are therefore:

- Setting Indicators
- Collecting Data (as set out in the M&E Action Plan)
- Making Data Useful and Using Data



# Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are conducted to obtain **qualitative information** on a range of selected topics from community members and/or beneficiaries. FGDs usually involve a relatively large but manageable group of individuals (8–12 for instance). Each FGD lasts on average an hour.

FGDs focus on collecting detailed information on perceptions, opinions, beliefs and behaviors and insights of people, for example, on new techniques promoted by your program or services offered; on challenges to adopt new ideas being promoted; and to identify key lessons learned for improved design of future programs. Basically, FGDs are used to answer questions such as ‘how’ and ‘why’ whereas quantitative methods such as surveys are used to answer the question “how many?”. Also, rather than asking questions that have yes or no answers (closed-ended questions), qualitative methods such as FGDs are based on ‘open-ended’ questions which require respondents to formulate their own answers.

The following steps should be included in planning and preparing for FGDs

## **1. Clearly define the purpose of the focus group**

The most important preparation is to have a clear idea of the questions you want answered (such as questions related to specific indicators) and based on this, to develop a checklist of questions / topics . The ‘facilitator’ will use this checklist of quite the line of questioning and discussion. Do not ask questions that only require a “yes” or “no” answer; such questions usually do not stimulate discussion and thus miss out on important information that will help you to understand the “how” and “why.” You can include yes/no questions if you intend to follow up this with more probing ‘why’ questions.

## **2. Identify and invite the participants**

Generally it is hard to conduct a FGD with a group larger than 8-12, but you may wish to invite more in anticipation of no-shows. The composition of the FGDs depend on who your target groups are and the purpose of the focus group is. In some contexts and depending on the topics, it might be important to segregate FGDs according to gender to ensure that both men and women have an opportunity to openly share their often differing perspectives. When inviting the participants, make sure you communicate the purpose of the meeting and how the data will be used. If children are invited them, make sure that consent forms are filled in by parents or verbal consents are provided.

## **3. Sharpen your facilitation skills.**

The success of the FGD depends on the facilitator. A facilitator should be able to deal tactfully with outspoken group members, keep the discussion on track, and make sure every participant

is heard. A good facilitator makes sure that the participants are comfortable and engaged in the discussion, that the discussion is not dominated or influenced by any particular person, that the discussion is not dominated by a particular gender, and that it is interesting to the participants. Having a qualified, well-trained team of people to conduct focus groups and other qualitative data collection exercises is, of course, an important prerequisite to doing qualitative work.

#### **4. Bring all the required materials & arrange seating**

Make sure you bring all the required materials, including for instance list of participants to be completed, voice recorder to record the session if appropriate, refreshments, flipcharts or notepads, and most importantly your list of questions. Arrange the room so all participants can view one another. (U-shaped seating is commonly used.) As participants arrive, set the tone for a comfortable, enjoyable discussion by welcoming them

#### **5. Hold the discussion**

Welcome the group. Introduce yourself and the co-facilitator. Introduce the purpose and context of the focus group. Let participants know how much time it will take. Explain the means to record the session. Carry out the focus group as per the plan checklist of questions. You should also be flexible, i.e., leave room for asking questions that arise spontaneously from the discussion, in order to probe more deeply into a topic. Allow a few minutes to wrap up and close the focus group session. This includes thanking the participants, giving them an opportunity for further input (e.g., “Any last comments or questions?”), telling them how the data will be used, and explaining when the larger process will be completed.

*Extracted from FSN Network M&E Task Force; Monitoring and Evaluation Facilitator’s Guide, 2014;*  
[https://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/M%26E%20Facilitator%20Guide\\_May%202015\\_0.pdf](https://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/M%26E%20Facilitator%20Guide_May%202015_0.pdf)

# Evaluation Report - Outline

## Outline of an Evaluation Report

<b>Executive Summary</b>	It should be tightly drafted, and usable as a free-standing document. It should be short. It should focus on the main analytical points, indicate the main conclusions, lessons learned and specific recommendations.
<b>Main Text</b>	The main text should start with an introduction describing, first, the project or program to be evaluated and, second, the evaluation objectives. The body or core of the report should follow the five <b>evaluation criteria</b> (Relevance, Efficiency, Impact, Cost-Effectiveness, and Sustainability), describing the facts and interpreting or analyzing them in accordance with the key questions pertinent to each criterion.
<b>Conclusions Recommendations</b>	These should be presented as a separate final chapter. Wherever possible, for each key conclusion there should be a corresponding recommendation. The key points of the <i>conclusions</i> will vary in nature but will often cover aspects of the evaluation criteria. The ultimate value of an evaluation depends on the quality and credibility of the recommendations offered. <i>Recommendations</i> should therefore be as realistic, operational and pragmatic as possible. Recommendations should be carefully targeted to the appropriate audiences at all levels.
<b>Annexes</b>	These can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Terms of Reference of the evaluation</li><li>• Logical Framework matrices (original and updated)</li><li>• List of persons/organizations consulted</li><li>• Literature and documentation consulted</li><li>• Other technical annexes (e.g. statistical analyses)</li></ul>

Extracted from European Commission's PCM Operational Guidelines, 2004,  
[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/multimedia/publications/publications/manuals-tools/t101\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/multimedia/publications/publications/manuals-tools/t101_en.htm)

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