



# WHAT TO DO When the Evaluators Arrive



Suggestions for how you can make a program evaluation work best for your organization and intended environmental results.

## #1 TIP: Get involved and STAY involved

Good evaluators will seek out as many opinions as possible. YOUR opinions are essential to evaluators designing and implementing a good evaluation, and to them providing a report that will be useful.

## PLANNING PHASE

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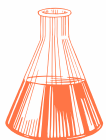
### Talk About Objectives

These may be set by another party, but even if they are, evaluators usually set out some subobjectives. You may be able to make a good argument for why your interest is important to the overall objective.



### Talk About a scope that makes sense

Good evaluators know you are the expert, not them. Help them set a scope that makes sense. Working together on a logic model, theory of change, or system model will help them understand how timeframes figure in, but most evaluators are not familiar with environmental work—we know it can take decades to see the most significant impacts, and how weather anomalies (or full climate shifts) can wipe out years of results.



### Help with Weighing Methods

Here is where you suggest that they use your best environmental data to help them SEE and SHOW results. Help them to help you. They may pilot-test methods to see if they work, and you can offer to help if you can. Survey questions that don't make sense to people across an organization give evaluators super-useless results. (And they probably want to do a survey...)

## RESEARCH PHASE



### Participate in an Interview (or three) or Respond to a Survey

Good evaluators know that the best ideas are in people—so don't be shy about offering your suggestions.

Good surveys are almost always anonymous. Read the intro language carefully to make sure. Good evaluators provide multiple ways for you to share your thoughts. If the survey doesn't work, send an email or a magazine letter cut-out note by USPS.

When you're in an interview or responding to a survey, ask about anonymity, recordings, and interview notes, both as records and as quotes or comments in an eventual report. Even if you're sure you won't say anything you wouldn't say to your boss, it's good to know exactly where your words could end up.



### Provide and Explain Data & Documents

Evaluators LOVE data. Some evaluators love environmental data (ME!). But make sure you keep up your good data practices when sharing information. Consider what counts as Personally Identifiable Information (latitude and longitude may count!), what details are important about data collection and summarization, timing, context, etc.

Documents are like art but uglier: they're only worth anything because of their provenance and context.



### Suggest Fixes

Again: good evaluators know the best ideas for how to get better live in the heads of people in the organization! Consider this an opportunity to get your solution to the top of the organization.

## REPORTING PHASE



### Environmental Connections

Encourage geographic depiction of results in reports. Verify that environmental results include appropriate context for seasonality, interannual variability, topographic considerations, and other factors.

## REPORTING PHASE, contd.



### Review how the evaluators used the data you provided:

- Are there things missing?
- Are there errors in interpretation?
- Review—and suggest corrections to—findings and conclusions
- Do they get a good sense of WHY things happened or didn't? This is the real power of external evaluations: they can spot things that you may not see when you have your eyes on the trees and not the forest.



### Think critically about the recommendations:

How feasible are they? Can you envision implementing the changes the evaluators are suggesting? Why or why not? The evaluators can help you best when they understand the ins and outs of how the organization works -- or doesn't. If there are alternatives that might work better, now's the time to suggest them.

## AFTER THE EVALUATION



### Implement the recommendations (!)

Especially since you have your best suggestions included here, make sure you don't let these fall by the wayside. It's so easy to do when you're busy and understaffed!



### Practice your evaluative mindset

Evaluation can pivot your mindset on all of the questions that make us good critical thinkers: who, what, how, when, and why.



### Find ways to make the evaluation work for you and your department/program

Are there ways to highlight how additional resources would help you get better results? Remind people of this. Are there ways to use the results in future grant applications? Definitely do that. Keep track of new or surprising results. Did the evaluation and its recommendations lead to improvements that you can measure? THIS IS THE GOAL!

