



8 TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL EVIDENCE-BASED EVALUATIONS

1

Integrate
evaluation to
the initiative
plan





Many challenges in
evaluation can be
avoided when the
evaluation is planned
together with the
initiative itself.





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This means that the initiative's plan also details **how it will be evaluated**.



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The **first** evaluation
can take place
already in this
planning stage.



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Many decisions taken in the early days of the initiative's lifespan determine what kind of evaluation designs, methods and data can be used in later evaluations.



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2

Secure
funding and
resources for
evaluation





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One common
challenge for
evaluation is that
there is no funding
for it.



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This seems to be
particularly common
with long-term
programmes and
short-term actions that
rely on **limited-term**
project funding.





In these cases, the funder may require that the initiative is evaluated, but there are **no extra resources allocated** for this purpose.





An evaluation, even in its more simple forms, requires rather **significant resources**. It should be clearly **planned** where these resources will come from.





It is recommended
that funding for
PVE/CVE/Derad
initiatives have
a **dedicated budget**
for evaluation on top
of the funding for
implementing
the initiative itself.



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3

Define the
initiative's design
and objectives
clearly





The **starting point** for virtually any type of evaluation is a clear understanding of its objectives, implementation plan and the underlying assumption about how the planned actions are supposed to produce the intended outcomes (**theory of change**).





Ideally, the objectives and theory of change are carefully developed in the planning stage of the initiative.





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If objectives have not been properly defined, it is **difficult** to conduct a high-quality evaluation.



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Develop initiative's
data monitoring
practices with
evaluation in mind





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The kind of evaluation it is possible to conduct depends strongly on what kind of data is available.



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There are many kinds of data that can be collected during the evaluation, but some evaluation designs require data that can only be collected at a **specific point in time.**





For instance, in order to reliably evaluate an initiative's impact on participants, there should be some information about their situation at the time when they started.





An evaluation, even in its more simple forms, requires rather **significant resources**. It should be clearly **planned** where these resources will come from.





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**Evaluation almost
always requires good
documentation of
the initiative's
activities.**



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When the initiative has systematic monitoring and record-keeping practices that are informed by the needs of future evaluations, the necessary data will exist when needed.





Insufficient monitoring practices do not make evaluation impossible, but they **significantly limit** the available options and can have a **negative impact** on the reliability of its results.



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Focus on
learning



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An evaluation is at
its most useful
when it is **planned**
and conducted
for learning
purposes.



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This means that the evaluation is **designed to support further development** of the initiative and it includes a clear **plan for how its results will be used.**



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It is recommended the evaluation not to be connected to funding decisions but instead to be **conducted in the middle of a funding period.**





This provides the most **constructive environment** for conducting the evaluation without pressure to show success, providing a genuine opportunity to use the results for the initiative's improvement.



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6

Involve key
stakeholders in
evaluation
planning





Evaluations often tend to be a **top-down process** in which the objective and design are **set by the funder**.

Experience has shown that this is **not a very productive strategy**.





Instead, it is usually better to take a more **participatory approach** and involve key stakeholders, especially those implementing the initiative, in the evaluation process **from its very beginning.**





Including stakeholders allows for creating the ownership and trust necessary to achieve reliable results.

When stakeholders are actively included in the planning process, it **shows that their views, knowledge and experience are valued.**





When the evaluation responds to the needs of those involved in implementing the initiative, the evaluation **no longer presents itself as an extra task that is required by someone else;**





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instead
it is seen as
something
beneficial for
developing their
own work.



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This provides further **motivation to cooperate in producing the data needed for the evaluation and being honest about possible weaknesses and failures.**



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Make sure the
evaluator has a
good understanding
of the PVE/CVE/
Derad field





When the evaluation
is conducted by an
external evaluator, it
is good to make
sure that the
evaluator is familiar
with the
PVE/CVE/Derad field
and its specific
characteristics.





While many
common evaluation
types and methods
can be applied to
the evaluation of
PVE/CVE/Derad
initiatives,





it is rather difficult
to make sense of
any data or
observations
without having a
good general
understanding of
the field.



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8

Think early about
ethics and ways to
ensure data
availability





One common challenge in evaluations of PVE/CVE/Derad initiatives is that **ethical and security concerns can limit access to data.**





Government authorities and those implementing the initiative can be **hesitant to share information**, especially when it includes details about an **individual's political opinions or personal matters**.





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**Security aspects
can limit access
to sites where
interviews or
observations
could be
conducted.**



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It is recommended to **find out early on what kinds of ethical, security and legal limitations there are for data sharing**, and to think about ways to reach the best possible results within these limits.



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Bonus
tip!



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Another set of challenges derives from the **sensitive and stigmatised nature of violent extremism.**





An initiative's target groups and individuals can be difficult to reach and build trust with because of the **fragile situation and relations with people involved in extremism.**





They may also be unwilling to share their true views, as those may be perceived as socially undesirable and stigmatised.





Therefore, it is recommended to **think carefully about whom to choose as an evaluator**, to win the trust necessary for collecting the data – and do it in a way that does not jeopardise the individuals' trust in the initiative itself.