

Stage 1: Developing an Evaluation Plan for Your Project

STEP 1: Writing "SMART" Objectives



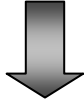
STEP 2: Completing a Work Plan



STEP 3: Developing Research Questions



STEP 4: Choosing Research Methods



STEP 5: Constructing the Evaluation Plan

This stage of the guide will take you through the process of completing a work plan and an evaluation plan for your program. A program work plan is developed to help you identify and document your program goals, objectives, and activities, and a time frame in which objectives and activities should be completed. Clear documentation of your work plan will help you create a complete and organized evaluation plan describing the details of your evaluation.

STEP 1: Writing "SMART" Objectives

Purposes

To understand what an objective is.

To understand the components of "SMART" objectives.

To understand the difference between process and outcome objectives.

Outcome

To produce SMART process and outcome objectives for your project.

Definitions

Goals: Broad and long-range accomplishments to which you hope your program will contribute.

Objectives: Specific, concrete, observable, or measurable statements of what a program is expected to achieve to move the program toward its goals.

Process Objectives: Objectives that describe how the program is carried out.

Outcome Objectives: Objectives that describe the impact, effects, or results of the program.

Activities: Steps you take in your program to accomplish your objectives.

Stakeholders: Everyone who is involved in or has an interest in the program, including program participants, staff, other agencies, and funders.

Why write objectives?

- Objectives are like benchmarks. They reflect what you expect your program will accomplish.
- Good objectives reflect good program design and are key to good program implementation.
- Objectives are the most important elements for documenting and evaluating your program's efforts.
- Accomplishing objectives should move your project toward its goals.

SMART OBJECTIVES

Well-written objectives are sometimes called "SMART" objectives because they are:

Specific statements of what the project will accomplish

Measurable or observable

Answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? How?

Realistic in recognizing the concrete things a project can actually accomplish.

Time-related

SMART objectives also:

- Take the ideas of the various program stakeholders into consideration.
- Address both processes and outcomes of the program.
- Are good for women and girls.

Reference: Wenzel, S.A. and Brill, E. (1998). *Mapping a Path for Evaluation: A Planning Guide*, 2nd Ed. Chicago, IL: Girl's Best Friend Foundation.

What are Process and Outcome Objectives?

Process Objectives

- Answer the questions: "In order to reach the program goal, who needs to do what, with whom, and when is it to be done?"
- Focus on: activities carried out in the project, target audience of activities, other individuals involved.

Example: Between October 1999 and September 2000, project staff will connect at least 20 women to manufacturing employers with entry level opportunities.

Outcome Objectives

- Answer the question: "What effect do we hope the program will have?" or "What do we hope will be the results of the project?"
- Focus on: changes in attitudes, feelings, knowledge, and/or behavior of individuals involved, or changes in a complex system (such as state legislature or work-site) that the program is trying to influence.

Example: 60% of women completing the training program during program year 2001 will have acquired the skills needed to pass the carpenter's entrance exam.

⇒ Now continue to the next page to complete the Exercise for Step 1.

⇒ **Remember**
Program evaluation should consider both processes and outcomes. However, depending on the program goals and the expectations of stakeholders, you may choose to focus your evaluation more heavily on processes or on outcomes.

STEP 1 Exercise

Instructions: Review each objective below to determine whether it is a process or outcome objective. Next, determine whether each objective is a SMART objective. Refer to the SMART Objectives Box in Step 1 for SMART definitions. If the objective is not SMART, revise it in the last column. See page 84 for answers.

Objectives	Process or Outcome?	SMART or Not SMART?	Rewrite as SMART objective
<i>Example:</i> Increase awareness of nontraditional career options for women on TANF served by caseworkers trained through the project.	OUTCOME	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> R <input type="checkbox"/> T	Six months after the DHS training, a random sample of women on TANF served by caseworkers at the Westside office will demonstrate 80% greater awareness of nontraditional career options than women sampled prior to the training.
By the end of the workshop, 85% of the students will be able to identify 5 non-traditional trades.		<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> R <input type="checkbox"/> T	
By the end of the 1999 Session of the Illinois Legislature, Bill #35 will have been subject to public hearings.		<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> R <input type="checkbox"/> T	
Conduct 4-6 outreach and orientation sessions to women residing in targeted urban zones of Chicago.		<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> R <input type="checkbox"/> T	
Over the course of the year, 50% (20) of students will receive completion certificates.		<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> R <input type="checkbox"/> T	
Provide hands-on career awareness workshops for seventh and eighth grade girls.		<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> R <input type="checkbox"/> T	
Six months after the training, caseworker referrals to non-traditional jobs or apprenticeships will have increased 50%.		<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> R <input type="checkbox"/> T	

⇒ After completing this Exercise, go to Worksheet 1 in the back of the guide to write SMART objectives for your program.

STEP 2: Completing a Work Plan

Purposes

To plan program activities with goals and objectives in mind.

To learn the difference between process objectives and program activities.

Outcome

To produce a work plan that includes goals, objectives, program activities, and a realistic time table.

Definitions

Work Plan: A document that describes the program by listing the title and staff members, program goal(s), objectives, activities, and when program activities will take place.

Activities:

A) The services or functions carried out by a program; that is, what the program does.

B) What programs develop and implement to produce desired outcomes.

Why develop a work plan?

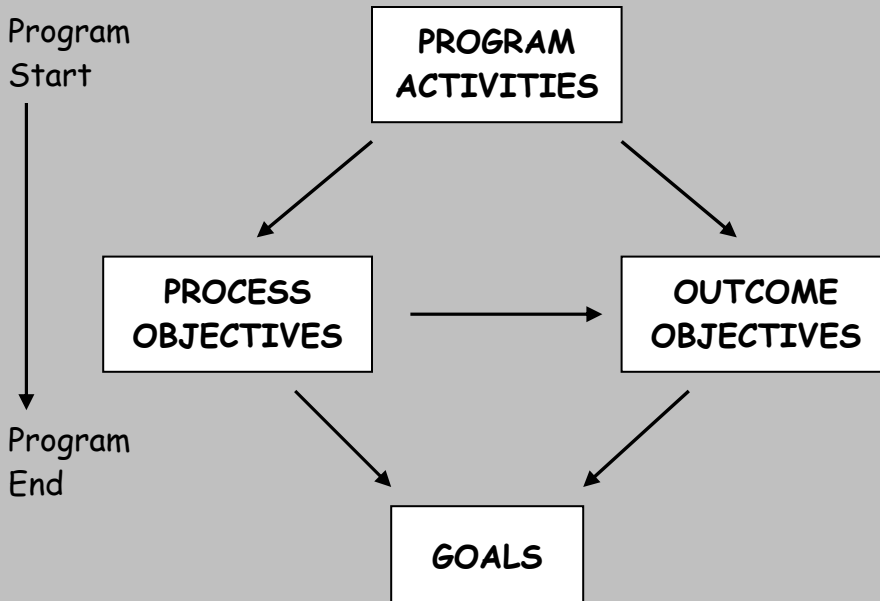
- Having a work plan for your program is like having a map to trace the program's progress and outcomes.
- By translating your program's activities into a work plan you are taking the next step in moving your program's objectives into the day-to-day actions of who will do what, when, where, and how.

Remember

- The day-to-day activities of a program are designed to accomplish the program's objectives.
- Objectives are intended to contribute to the program's broader goals.
- Evaluation is designed to determine whether the program is meeting its objectives by discovering which activities enhance or limit success, and why.

A program works something like this:

Program activities occur over time to allow you to meet objectives and move towards your goals.



A work plan maps the program into this:

GOAL(s):

A. Process Objectives:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. Outcome Objectives:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Key Program Activities:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Completion Date

A work plan displays your goals and objectives, the program activities that will help you to achieve your objectives, and when program activities will take place.

➤ **Remember**

You may not have accomplished your goals by the end of your program, but you should be closer than when the program began.

🔑 What is the difference between process objectives and activities?

Activities are the daily tasks of your program that are designed to help you accomplish your objectives. Process objectives describe how the program is carried out; they are measurable benchmarks that help you determine the success of your program.

STEP 2 Exercise

Instructions: Review what you have learned about process objectives and activities, and determine whether the statements below are process objectives or activities. Circle the correct response (Hint: Objectives are “SMART”.)

Example: By March 15, 2002, CWIT Senior Policy Associate will incorporate 5 to 10 selected nontraditional training programs from CWIT's Nontraditional Training Directory into DHS' statewide computer referral system

Activity

Process Objective

1. By May 1, 2002, CWIT's Senior Policy Associate will complete the design of the pilot IDHS service coordination caseworker training initiative.
Activity Process Objective
2. Conduct information meeting with DHS Agency Head and other lead department heads.
Activity Process Objective
3. By end of program year, conduct 100 outreach and information sessions targeting low-income women to promote and recruit for high skill manufacturing training and jobs.
Activity Process Objective
4. In June and July 2002, CWIT's Senior Policy Associate, other staff and consultants will conduct the pilot training initiative with all (100%) service coordination case workers, job specialist[s], and middle management at the IDHS Ashland office.
Activity Process Objective
5. Meet with program staff to clarify administrative and clerical needs and expectations.
Activity Process Objective
6. Meet with CWIT youth partners and provide them with a range of options for further participation in youth activities.
Activity Process Objective
7. Produce a revised TOP curriculum guide for distribution by September 2004.
Activity Process Objective

⇒ After reviewing the sample work plan on the following page, develop your own work plan using Worksheet 2 in the back of the guide.

Example Program Work Plan

Program Name: *Manufacturing Opportunities for Women*

Program Goal(s): *To integrate nontraditional career awareness and information into the One-Stop Career Centers (OSCCs) and selected training programs throughout Chicago, in order to improve women's access to high-wage, high-skilled training programs and jobs.*

A. Process Objectives:

1. Complete curriculum for non-traditional career awareness trainings.
2. Produce a revised training guide on non-traditional occupations.
3. Use the training guide to train staff at 2-3 OSCCs.
4. Use the training guide to train staff of 2-3 training programs.

Completion Date

September 30, 2002

November 30, 2002

February 28, 2003

February 28, 2003

B. Outcome Objectives:

1. By end of training sessions, at least 90% of trainees will have increased awareness about Non-traditional careers for women in the trades.
2. By end of training sessions, at least 90% of trainees will know how to: recruit women; hold an all female orientation; retain women in their training program; what sexual harassment is and their responsibilities in dealing with it.
3. 80% of staff completing trainings will express greater interest in promoting nontraditional career opportunities among female job seekers.
4. By the end of the program year, OSCCs will have increased their referrals of women to non-traditional training programs and jobs by 40%.

February 28, 2003

February 28, 2003

February 28, 2003

May 30, 2003

Key Program Activities:

1. Create screening checklist for selecting OSCCs to participate.
2. Meet with management and staff of area OSCCs and training program partners.
3. Select OSCCs and training programs to receive training.
4. Create curriculum for training guide.
5. Write draft of the Technical Assistance Guide (TAG) for training.
6. Get feedback on training guide from Workforce Board and CWIT.
7. Meet with OSCC and training program staff to set up trainings.
8. Formalize tracking system at training sites to monitor referrals.

August 20, 2002

September 15, 2002

September 30, 2002

September 30, 2002

October 20, 2002

November 15, 2002

December 31, 2002

January 15, 2003

STEP 3: Developing Research Questions

✂ Purposes

To understand the use of research questions in developing an evaluation plan.

To understand the differences between research questions for process objectives and research questions for outcome objectives.

✂ Outcome

To write research questions that ask what you did in the program (process) and/or how it came out (outcomes/results).

✂ Definition

Research Questions: Questions you will need to answer in order to know how successful your project has been in meeting its process and outcome objectives.

Why write research questions?

- Research questions ask about what you did in your program (the process) and what impact your program had (its outcomes or results).
- Research questions are crucial in directing the course of the evaluation, because they help determine what information should be collected.
- Writing research questions about your program helps ensure program activities are documented and the information you collected can be used to answer your questions about the program.
- Answers to research questions allow you to draw conclusions in your evaluation. They help identify why the program was successful and where the problems arose.

➤ Remember

There are many possible research questions for each objective. Your research questions should address what you want to know about your program or policy initiative.

Writing Research Questions

Process and outcome objectives generate different kinds of research questions.

Research questions for *process objectives* ask:

Who?
What?
When?
Where?
Why?
How?

About:
Program activities
Program changes
Stakeholder views

Research questions for *outcome objectives* ask about:

Changes?
Effects?
Impacts?
Results?

In:
Attitudes
Behavior
Beliefs
Intentions
Knowledge
Opinions

Good Research Questions

- Are specific
- Match the objectives, activities, and outcomes of the project
- Are relevant to the experiences of those served by the program
- Ask for measurable or observable results
- Can realistically be answered given the resources, time, and experience of those doing the evaluation
- Seek information that will be good for the project

Examples of Research Questions

Example #1 – Process Objective

Between October 1999 and September 2000, project staff will connect at least 20 women to manufacturing employers with entry level opportunities.

Possible research questions:

- Who was selected to participate (which women and which employers)?
- How were manufacturing employers chosen?
- How were women selected to participate?
- When were the connections between women and employers made?
- Were women and employers satisfied with the connections?

Example #2 – Process Objective

During the year 2000, project staff will conduct at least 4 workshops for girls ages 12 to 15 on working in various occupations requiring skills in the trades.

Possible research questions:

- Who was recruited to participate in the workshop?
- When and where did the workshops take place?
- How many girls participated in each of the workshops?
- What activities took place in the workshops?
- What did the girls enjoy most/least about the workshops?

Example #3 – Outcome Objective

60% of women completing the training program during program year 2001 will have acquired the skills needed to pass the carpenter's entrance exam.

Possible research questions:

- What percentage of women who completed the training program passed the carpenter's entrance exam?
- After the training program, did women have more skills to pass the carpenter's entrance exam than before the program?
- Did participating women receive the training they had expected?

Example #4 – Outcome Objective

Six months after the training, caseworker referrals to non-traditional jobs or apprenticeships will have increased 50%.

Possible research questions:

- Have caseworker referrals to non-traditional jobs and apprenticeships increased since the training? How much?
- What types of non-traditional jobs and apprenticeships do caseworkers know about?
- What are the caseworkers' attitudes about non-traditional jobs and apprenticeships?
- Did caseworkers' intentions to make referrals to non-traditional jobs and apprenticeships change as a result of the training?

⇒ Now go to **Worksheet 3** in the back of the guide to develop research questions for your objectives.

STEP 4: Choosing Research Methods

✂ Purposes

To determine what information (data) you will need to answer your research questions.

To learn about different methods for collecting information (data).

✂ Outcome

To select realistic and appropriate data collection methods for evaluating your project.

✂ Definitions

Research Methods: Techniques used to collect, organize, analyze, and report information about the program.

Data: Information collected from program stakeholders to be used for understanding and evaluating the program.

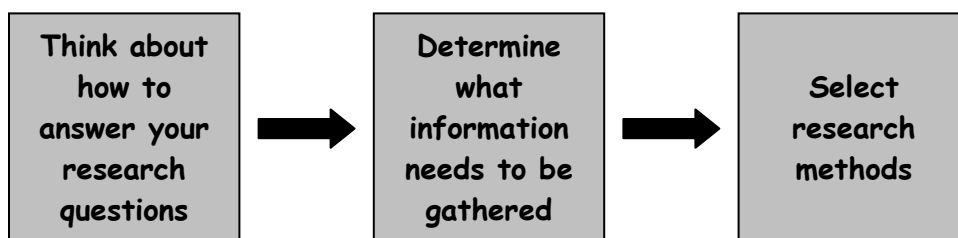
Data Collection Tools: Instruments used for gathering information for your evaluation (such as surveys, interview guides, and observation templates.)

Qualitative Methods: Data collection techniques in which data are collected in a non-numeric form in the form of words or images.

Quantitative Methods: Data collection techniques in which data are collected or converted into numeric form, and statistics are used to analyze the data.

🔑 How do I answer my research questions?

As you think about answering your research questions, consider what kinds of information you will need and the methods you will use to gather that information.



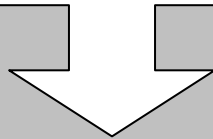
👉 Remember

There may be more than one way to get the information you need to answer your research questions. An important part of planning the evaluation is deciding which methods are most consistent with your project's resources and CWIT's philosophy.

To answer your research questions, ask:

What information is needed?

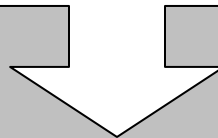
- What types of information can be used to answer the question?
- Do I need to compare information gathered before the project begins with comparable information gathered once the project is over?
- Do I need to compare the information provided by the client(s) with others not in the project?



To determine possible methods for gathering information, ask:

How can information be obtained?

- Who will answer the question?
- When will I collect the information?
- How do I want the final results to be reported? As statistics? As narrative examples? In written form? In visual form?



To determine how appropriate your chosen methods are, ask:

Are the selected methods realistic for the project?

- Do I have the resources (such as time, staff, skills, money) to use the selected methods?
- Can I simplify the way I collect the information?
- Do I have (or can I get) participants' permission to collect the information?
- Are my research methods consistent with CWIT's philosophy?

What are data collection methods?

Data collection methods are the techniques used to gather the information needed to answer your research questions. Different data collection methods may be needed to answer different research questions.

Data collection methods include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting surveys
- Interviewing individuals (structured, semi-structured, or open-ended interviews)
- Focus group interviewing
- Collecting agency records
- Administering performance tests (may be pre- and/or post-tests)
- Observation
- Life History/Storytelling
- Journaling
- Photography or video
- Collecting population statistics

Data collection methods are explained in more detail in Stage 2 of this guide and summarized in Appendix A.

What are data collection tools?

Data collection tools are the activities, instruments, or documents that can be administered, collected, or conducted to gather information needed to answer your research questions.

Examples of evaluation data collection tools are:

- Survey and testing instruments
- Questionnaires
- Interview and focus group guides
- Observation templates

Choosing data collection methods and tools

Example Objective: During the year 2000, project staff will conduct at least 4 workshops for girls ages 12 to 15 on working in various occupations requiring skills in the trades.

Research Question: What did the girls enjoy most/least about the workshops?

- *Information needed:* Details about what happened during the workshops from program staff and participating girls and possibly an observer.
- *Possible data collection methods:* Individual interviewing with program staff, focus group interviewing with participating girls, observation of workshops.
- *Possible data collection tools:* Individual and focus group interview guides, observation template.

⇒ **Remember**
The methods and tools you choose should be appropriate for the women or girls served by the program you are evaluating.

Quantitative vs. Qualitative

Data collection methods can be *quantitative* or *qualitative*.

Quantitative Methods:

- Methods used to gather quantitative information (information presented as or converted into numerical form).
- Involve structured data collection and statistical analyses.
- Provide information that is often considered more scientific and thus more convincing than qualitative methods, depending on the audience.
- Typically used for measuring outcomes.
- Examples include surveys, structured interviews, and performance tests.

Qualitative Methods:

- Methods used to gather qualitative information (information in the form of words or images)
- Include semi-structured, unstructured, or open-ended data collection, content analysis, and comparing across individuals.
- Provide details and in-depth information about those involved in the project.
- Can be used to measure both processes and outcomes.
- Examples include focus groups, observation, and semi-structured interviews.

Multiple Methods:

- Combining qualitative and quantitative methods will provide the richest answers to your research questions.
- By using multiple methods you will offer convincing evidence to a diverse audience.

Remember

Not all projects require both quantitative and qualitative data. The methods you choose should be the most appropriate for answering your research questions.

Sampling and Making Comparisons

When selecting your methods, think about how sampling and making comparisons might fit into your evaluation.

- **Sampling:** Choosing a group of individuals who will provide information for the evaluation. *For more on Sampling, see Appendix B.*
- **Group comparisons:** Comparisons may be made within a group by looking at differences among program participants. Comparisons may also be made between different groups, for example, by comparing program participants with non-participants. *See Appendix C for more information about making comparisons within and between groups.*
- **Comparisons over time:** If you have conducted an evaluation of your program in the past, you may wish to compare your evaluation data for the current year with evaluation data collected in previous years. In addition, funders often want to know what happens over time. When such comparisons are made, be sure the research methods and data collection tools you use are consistent over time. For example, questions on surveys, questionnaires, and interview guides should be asked the same way as in previous years. Comparisons cannot be made if the data collection process is not consistent.

STEP 5: Constructing the Evaluation Plan

Purposes

To integrate the steps involved in constructing an evaluation plan.

To learn about the pros and cons of involving an outside evaluator to assist with your evaluation.

Outcome

Produce an evaluation plan describing the steps and activities you will use to evaluate your project and the time frame for gathering information.

Definition

Evaluation Plan: Description of what will be evaluated, how information will be collected (including data collection methods and tools), when information will be collected, and who will provide information for the evaluation.

What do I need to consider in developing a realistic evaluation plan?

As you develop your evaluation plan, try answering the following questions to determine whether your plan is realistic and fits with your program.

- Is the plan consistent with the philosophy and mission of CWIT?
- Do we need an outside evaluator to assist with the evaluation?
- Are staff members involved in developing the evaluation plan?
- Will staff be collecting the data and if so, will they need training?
- Is there sufficient time to collect the data well?
- What are the costs of the data collection methods we plan to use?
- Are the data collection methods intrusive to the client's privacy?

(Adapted from Donors Forum of Chicago. (2001). Outcome Evaluation of Nonprofit Organizations.)

Remember

Make sure your evaluation plan is reasonable in terms of your program's resources (such as time, money, and staffing), and consistent with your program's philosophy.

How do I construct my evaluation plan?

Construct your evaluation plan by incorporating the elements you have produced for each step of Stage 1 of this guide. Use the Worksheets at the end of the guide to construct your evaluation plan. These Worksheets will allow you to document each of your goals, objectives, and activities, and maintain a time frame in which evaluation activities should take place.

The evaluation plan you develop should contain:

- SMART process and outcome objectives for your program and the program activities that will help you to achieve your objectives.
- Research questions based on your program objectives, focused on what you really want to know about your program.
- Methods you plan to use to get the information needed to answer your research questions. (Who will gather the data? How? When? In what form?)
- A timeline for gathering the information you need for the evaluation.

Ethical considerations

Several ethical issues should be addressed when you are evaluating your program, including:

- Keeping stakeholders' interests in mind: *Your participants' inclusion in your evaluation research is voluntary. There can be no consequences should they choose not to take part in the evaluation. There can also be no incentives for those who choose to be involved in the evaluation.*
- Confidentiality: *The information your informants provide should only be made available to individuals evaluating the program. The methods you use to ensure confidentiality should be discussed with informants. For more on confidentiality, see Appendix D.*
- Providing training for those working on the evaluation: *Program staff members who are working on the evaluation should receive proper skills training for the data collection methods they use.*
- Proper treatment of comparison groups: *See Appendix C to learn more about comparison groups.*
- Obtaining informed consent from informants: *You should inform your evaluation participants about the purpose of the evaluation, their role as participants in the evaluation, the risks and benefits of participating, and how the confidentiality of participants will be assured. To learn more about informed consent, see Appendix D.*

⇒ **Remember**
Activities for your program and data collection for the evaluation often take place at the same time.

Evaluation Partnerships

If you do not have a lot of experience with evaluation, you may wish to hire an outside evaluation consultant. When you work with an outside evaluator, that relationship should be seen as a partnership between your organization and the evaluating organization, in which the goal is to produce the evaluation your organization desires.

You may consider working with an outside evaluator for the following reasons:

- Outside evaluators may be able to offer advice about evaluation approaches and methods.
- Outside evaluators can provide training for staff to learn new skills for current and future evaluations.
- Outside evaluators may have resources such as staff, tools, or technology that can help you gather and organize the information for your evaluation.
- Your program or organization may not have the time or expertise to conduct the evaluation alone.

Remember

- Outside evaluators require time to become familiar with the organization and its programs.
- Work with hired evaluators to make sure their approach is compatible with the philosophies of the organization or the intended evaluation.
- In your evaluation plan, specify which activities are to be completed internally and which activities are to be completed by the outside evaluator.

⇒ After reviewing the examples on the following pages, complete your evaluation plan using Worksheets 4 and 5 in the back of the guide.

