Partnerships against Domestic Violence
BULLETIN FOUR – EVALUATION

Strategic Partners

Introduction

Welcome to the fourth Bulletin from the Meta-Evaluation team.

As the evaluators of the *Partnerships* initiative we have been interested in the range of ways in which projects have gone about evaluation.   This bulletin discusses a range of evaluation methods and approaches to inform and assist projects receiving funding under *Partnerships*. It will provide a contextual framework for projects and highlight the gains for both project staff and funding bodies. We have had a number of requests for information on evaluation and thought that a Bulletin on the subject might be useful. Please contact us if we can be of more assistance.

What is Evaluation?

Evaluation is a critical component of every effective program. It is one step in the ongoing process of planning, implementation, and review which allows a program or project to remain relevant, appropriate and dynamic. It is a way of checking that a program is delivering the results that it set out to achieve.

 Evaluation enables facilitators/workers to assess whether the program is reaching its goals and objectives, the direction in which the project is moving, the appropriateness of leadership style, and the relevance of the program content. At an individual level, evaluation can enable participants to assess their own learning and the personal value of their involvement **.** From a management perspective, evaluating programs enhances accountability and enables decisions to be made about future directions of a program. As the following quote reflects:

> *Evaluation is a judgement about something. How you judge it depends on expectations, past experience, what you think is important, what you think is not important (Hawe et al, 1990:6).*

Why is Evaluation Important?

Workers can benefit from evaluation because it can identify elements of a program which are working well and highlight those areas that require change or improvement. Evaluation can provide valuable and rewarding feedback about progress and enables more effective planning and program development.

Government and non-government programs are funded from public monies derived from tax revenue and are therefore expected to be accountable and to describe the service they provide to the community and what effect these services have. Without the information that evaluation provides nobody can be completely confident that programs are appropriate to their community or are running effectively and efficiently.

Therefore in undertaking evaluation, the questions *what* and *who* is the evaluation for and who should be involved, are critical, as this will determine the intensity and method adopted (Wadsworth, 1990). The design of the evaluation should also be according to the resources available. It is usual that approximately 10 per cent of time and financial resources are allocated to the evaluation component.

There is no general agreement on what evaluation is. The concept is defined in multiple, even contradictory, ways. This is can be explained by the variety of disciplines (economics, policy and administration studies, statistics, sociology, psychology, etc.), institutions and practitioners active in evaluations and the wide range of issues, needs and clients that evaluation serves.

Virtually any type of feedback or inquiry may be called evaluation. A number of terms (review, follow-up, monitoring, audit, scrutiny, and assessment) are used to refer to evaluative activities. Some experts have expressed concern about the possibility of the concept losing its meaning. Furthermore, there are other feedback mechanisms, in addition to evaluation, that can be used to improve decision-making.

Evaluation in PADV Projects

Partnerships projects should all have some form of evaluation component. For very small projects, there should be self-collection of data either about the project and/or about the impact of the project. Where projects have been relatively small (either in scope or funding) it is usually accepted that project staff will collect core data. This will be done by the project managers as the nature of the project or funding does not warrant an external evaluator. Strategic Partners has provided projects with core data or questions that it requires on each project. In essence, this is:

A. Projects which did not have an evaluation component and are now completed.

1. What was the process for developing the project?

2. What were the objectives of the project?

3. What were the key project results/outcomes?

4. What was learnt by doing the project, including:
    – the process;
    – the target group;
    – the production and development;
    – the distribution of material;
    – the followup process.

5. What has happened to any products or resources developed through the project?

6. What is known about their impact?

7. If you were doing this project again, what would you change or do differently?

8. Overall, what are the three major learnings from this project?

B. New/Current Projects

There are a number of levels at which each project can be evaluated, such as:

Process:

• How was it established?

• Who was involved?

• What needs, issues, questions did the project address?

• What will be/were the critical points at which the assumptions were/can be tested?

Formative Evaluation:

• What problems emerged during the course of the project?

• How were these emerging problems dealt with?

• What changes were made/occurred during the project?

Summative Evaluation:

• What was achieved through this project?

• What difference was made?

• What still needs to be done?

• What have been the main overall learnings?

• How can the learnings be utilised/disseminated?

Larger projects should build in an evaluation component and allocate funds for this purpose. These projects will either undertake an internal or external evaluation and should, at minimum, include the core data as previously mentioned. Many projects or initiatives will have external evaluators to either undertake the evaluation or oversee and synthesise the evaluations of s number of projects.

Strategic Partners has, as part of its evaluation brief, the responsibility of ensuring that all projects have at least a minimum evaluation or reporting component and is happy to provide advice about evaluation frameworks and processes.

Principal Aims of Evaluation

The principal aims of evaluation may be characterised as improving decision-making, resource allocation and accountability:

- **Improving decision-making:** Evaluation provides information on the impacts of policies. It can be seen as a step from formal control mechanisms to steering through information, from transactions control to strategic control, from input management to management by outcomes. It assists policy-makers in judging the value of public programs, in improving or challenging them and in designing future Programs. Evaluation also contributes to the learning process of those managing and implementing programs by increasing their understanding of the work they carry out and helping them to develop it. In addition, other interests (e.g. scientific) may be satisfied in gaining more insight to the functioning of society.

- **Assisting in resource allocation:** Evaluation can help decision makers improve resource allocation and make better use of existing funds. They assist in finding more effective and efficient ways of reaching the desired results and provide justification for shifting expenditure to facilitate the development of new priority areas - and contribute to finding the right level of funding for programs or even prioritising them when budget cuts are needed.

- **Enhancing accountability:** Evaluation can contribute to the accountability within an organization and to the funding body.

Program evaluations are systematic, analytical assessments, addressing important aspects of a program and its value, and seeking reliability and usability of findings.

There is no "best way" to carry out an evaluation. Various approaches and methodologies have different success factors. The role of evaluation will differ according to the decision-making processes (e.g. economic and experimental evaluation used for budgetary decision-making, and naturalistic evaluation used for program improvement and design). The important issue, is to design the evaluation to suit the subject, desired evaluation information, available resources and the use of findings.

Meta evaluation: Some initiatives call for a more sophisticated approach to evaluation because of the complexities of the task involved. This type of evaluation is discussed in the last section of this Bulletin as it relates to the *Partnerships* initiative.

Types of Evaluations

Summative evaluations are often carried out when the program has been in place for some time to study its effectiveness and judge its overall value. These evaluations are typically used to assist in allocating resources or enhancing public accountability. The clients are usually external, such as government, program managers and other decision-makers. The objectivity and overall reliability of findings is considered important, and external evaluators are therefore often commissioned to conduct the evaluation. Questions regarding the overall relevance of the program outcomes achieved are addressed in a summative evaluation.

Formative evaluations are usually undertaken during the implementation of the program to gain further insight and contribute to a learning process. The purpose is to support and improve the management, implementation and development of the program. The evaluators as well as clients are often internal to the organisation. However, increasingly external evaluators are being used to assist key learnings to emerge. The objectivity of findings is often not the main concern, more emphasis is put on the direct applicability of results. Operational questions, monitoring of events and to some extent impacts are addressed.

Action-Research Approach: Formative evaluation is often based on an action-research approach. A number of core principles have been defined as features of the action-research approach:

- *Evaluation should be seen as part of a total process which seeks to establish issues, facilitate participation and determine strategies for change.*

- *Evaluation should be viewed as a dialogue over time and not as a static picture at one point in time.*

- *Evaluation should involve participants in the entire process from its formulation, to the discussion of how to seek solutions, interpret and use findings.*

The evaluation process should be defined in terms of immediate and direct benefit to project participants.

The objective of evaluation is not to seek absolute truth but to provide insight and well-justified views on programs. Evaluation enables decisions to be taken on a more informed basis.

Methodological Challenges

There are methodological challenges intrinsic to all approaches to evaluation. For instance, **issues related to causality** are common. Conclusive evidence of cause-effect relationships can rarely be established, since controlling all relevant variables is seldom possible. Experimental evaluation design is often difficult, expensive and lengthy, if not impossible to apply in practice. Even if experimental evaluation design is used, generalisation beyond the conditions of the experiment is usually uncertain. However, in many evaluations, for example when evaluating the implementation or management of a program, establishing a firm causal relationship is not the major objective of evaluation.

Choosing criteria for evaluation may be a challenge simply because the intended objectives of programs or projects are often multiple, vague, hidden, evolving and even conflicting. Another difficulty is deciding whether to focus only on how official objectives are achieved or to take a broader view and study all the effects of the program. The latter gives a more comprehensive picture of the outcome of the program but is more complex and time-consuming.

Evaluation is not knowledge for its own sake, but knowledge for action. It is important that evaluation material be used in decision-making. If not, the administration will soon loose interest and evaluation will become an empty exercise.

Setting an appropriate time period over which the program or project is evaluated is difficult but critical, as relevant outcomes or projects should have sufficient time to mature. However, the information's usefulness may diminish if the evaluated program is changed before the evaluation is finalised or evaluation findings applied.

Choosing methods for evaluation is also a challenge. Various ways of collecting and analysing data provide different perspectives on the evaluated program. There is, for example, a considerable discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of using quantitative and qualitative methods in evaluation.

It is often difficult to identify **program outcomes**. As pointed out earlier, there may be various reasons (other than the program) that wholly or partly generate the outcomes. Thus, it may be difficult to determine what evidence is sufficient to draw valid and reliable conclusions about outcomes. The ability to gather evidence can be restrained by available resources. Another problem concerning conclusions is whether evaluation findings can be generalised to other times, places or subjects. This is of particular importance when evaluation findings are expected to contribute to future policy decisions.

Methodological challenges (only some of them have been covered here) can be dealt with when limitations are recognised and properly addressed. This requires specific knowledge and skills that can be gained by training staff and commissioning external expertise to conduct evaluations. Also, combining different methods is often the most fruitful approach to lessening methodological problems in evaluation. Furthermore, appropriate quality control mechanisms (see later discussion on ensuring technical quality) can be set up to guide the evaluation process.

Even if evaluation cannot provide definitive answers, it can add useful information to the discussion about performance; some credible information on what happened; and why. It is better to have this information than to have none.

Planning Evaluations

Thorough preparation of evaluations is a major factor in their success. It is worth putting time and effort into selecting the topic, determining scope and objectives, planning the evaluation process and choosing criteria to be used. Careful planning makes the management of evaluations easier and contributes to the quality of their outcome. However, planning should not become too rigid; a degree of flexibility allows evaluations to be adjusted to changes in needs and circumstances.

In planning an evaluation there are some key questions that need to be considered including:

- Who is the evaluation for?
- What purpose will it serve?
- What is the goal and aim of the evaluation?
- What do we know already about the program?

### Improving Evaluation Practices

- **Gain support from the top**
- **Generate effective demand**
- **Set realistic expectations**
- **Systematise evaluation activities**
- **Link with the budget process**
- **Choose the appropriate evaluator/value for money**
- **Plan evaluations**
- **Time evaluations appropriately**
- **Meet user needs**
- **Ensure relevance**
- **Involve stakeholders**
- **Ensure methodological quality**
- **Make judgements and recommendations**
- **Communicate findings**
- **Monitor or following-up**
- **Recognise needs of staff for training and support**

- What is the audience for any evaluation report?

- What resources and systems are available to support the evaluation?

- What are the key questions that need to be addressed?

- How will the data or evidence be collected and assembled and analysed?

- What is the budget and timeline for the evaluation?

What is Program Evaluation?

Program evaluation is concerned with the value or worth of a program, or finding out how well a program is running. It is the process of comparing performance against your program's objectives. It is an assessment of what has occurred measured against what was supposed to occur. Program evaluation also attempts to identify the causes of specific outcomes, and identify those which can be attributed to the program.

The Building Blocks
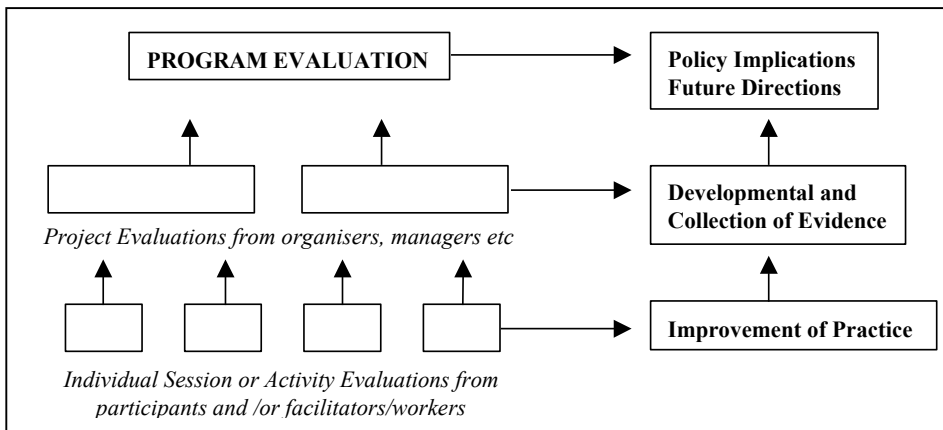
Evaluation follows a series of steps which forms a cycle of activity: from program delivery, through conducting evaluation, to incorporating the results into better planning and improved programs. The following is a summary of the steps in this evaluation cycle (NSW Health, Self Evaluation Kit, 1991: 13)

Evaluation Steps
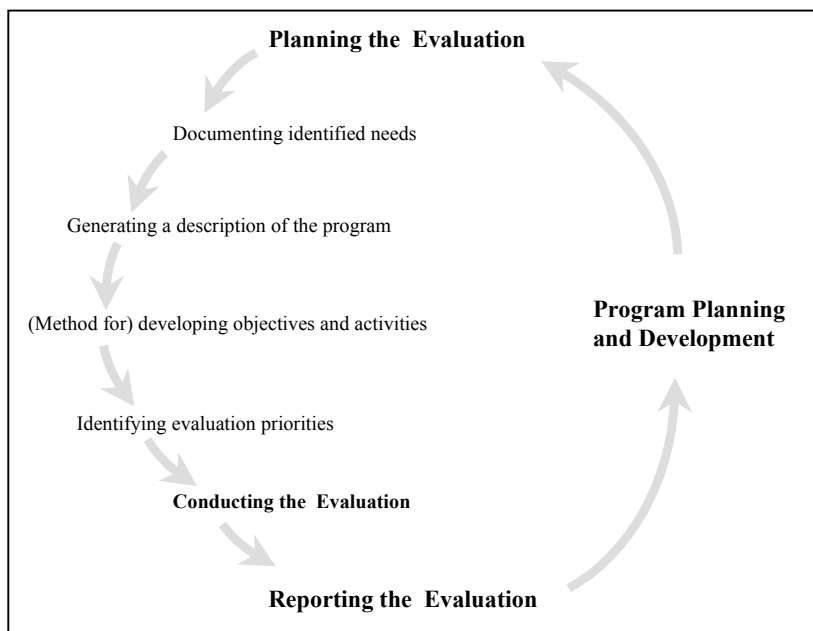
Evaluation with Indigenous Communities

Finding an evaluation methodology which is relevant to the experience of the local community is a critical issue for researchers working with Aboriginal communities. In the past much of the research has been 'done to' and taken away from Indigenous communities. For this reason it is important that the evaluation of *Partnerships* funded projects speak to the experience of the workers, committees and the communities in which they are located.

John Scougall from the Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Curtin University, WA identifies a number of factors which must be considered in designing evaluations with Indigenous community projects:

• **Ownership** should be in the hands of the local project and community.

• **The Primary Purpose** of evaluation should be to assist communities to work towards positive social change and not only for accountability to funders.

• **Data Collection** should be compatible with Indigenous experience. Story telling and use of the oral tradition is the most appropriate methodology and can be supplemented by other data collection such as questionnaires, and statistics.

• **Verification of Data** should be in the hands of the local community and the workers to ensure that there is no cross cultural bias or misinterpretation of information.

• **The Style of Presentation** should be in the words of the local workers and community as much as possible.

> *…by putting community voices first, and by organising, describing and presenting data in a way that is meaningful for community members, the evaluator highlights contextual complexity, diverse views and competing interests* (John Scougall, Indigenous Perspectives, Evaluation Journal of Australasia, Vol. 9. No. 1&2, 1997)

The question of who the evaluation is for is paramount. While the projects must report to the government for effective use of funding, the real value of the evaluation is that it assists the projects to be successful and demonstrates to the communities that a difference was made. This will assist in any future support from the communities and increase options for further funding.

The evaluation will have most benefit when those involved regularly ask the following questions:

- How is it going? Is it working? How do we know?
- What have we learned from what we are doing?
- Is there any way that we could do this better?
- How do we know that we are making a difference?

With these questions the workers could be asking those people using the service on a regular basis and adapting what is happening to meet local needs.

A group developing the evaluation methodology for Rural and Regional Domestic Violence Interventions agreed that the methodology should reflect Indigenous priorities and processes. This means that the methodology should, as much as possible, build on the stories of those in the local community:

- The workers
- The support groups who want the project to be effective – this would include the Committee of Management
- Local community groups who know that change is needed
- The women, children and men who are affected by domestic violence and supported by the project.

The methodology could include the following components:

- The stories of the workers and committees in a structured format
- Interviews with other service providers – including police, community health workers, doctors, social workers, youth workers etc
- Meetings with local community members to hear the community stories
- Case studies with women, children and men who use the services provided by the project
- Data kept by the workers for each activity and program that is run such as camps for young women.

Evaluating Educational Programs

As in all evaluations, how an educational program is to be evaluated should also be determined during the initial planning stages. As maintained by Kirkpatrick (1994:19) a number of factors need to be considered in the planning and implementation of educational interventions, including:

- determining needs
- setting objectives
- determining subject content
- selecting participants

- determining the best schedule

- selecting appropriate facilities

- selecting appropriate instructors

- selecting and preparing visual aids

- co-ordinate the workshop

- evaluating the workshop.

Incorporating evaluation into the planning stage enables an educator or program planner to decide how the program or workshop will be evaluated when forming objectives and going through the stages listed above.

The method adopted depends on what is wanted and the stage of the workshop. According to Kirkpatrick, *Evaluating Training Programs* (1994) evaluation addresses four distinct levels that follow on from one another and increase in complexity and time as you move from one level to the next.

The first level, **Reaction**, measures whether participants are satisfied with the program or workshop and ways the leader can improve content and process (Kirkpatrick, 1994). Reaction is similar to what is referred to as a process or formative evaluation which measures the *activities* of the workshop, workshop *quality* and *who it is reaching* (Hawe et al, 1990:60).
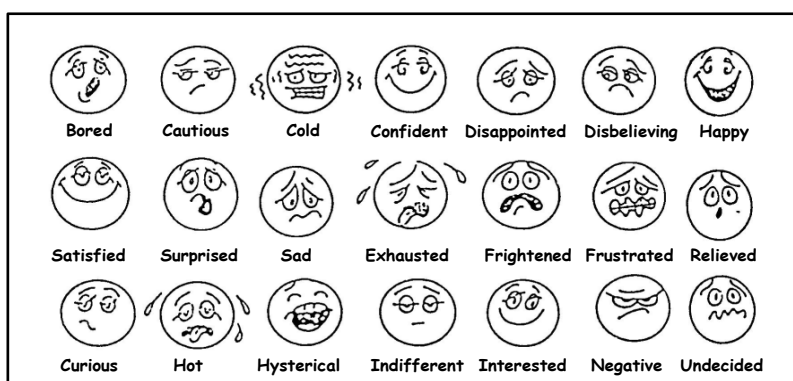
If participants are happy with the program or workshop, learning will more likely occur and the workshop will be able to achieve the results intended (Kirkpatrick, 1994). Reaction is often measured using "happy sheets" before a session ends. It can also be measured at intervals throughout the session by asking each group member "where they are at". It is important to seek the group's reaction before the session concludes to make sure everyone in the group has an opportunity to respond.

The second level of Kirkpatrick's process of evaluation, **Learning,** assesses a participant's change in attitudes, skills and knowledge as a result of attending the workshop. Evaluating this level tends to be more time consuming and technical than reaction. However, it is important to know because if learning has not occurred, behaviour will not change (Kirkpatrick, 1994). Typically, pre and post tests are used to measure any changes in the attitudes, skills and knowledge of participants and control groups may be used if possible.

The third level evaluates whether there has been any change in participants' **Behaviour** as a result of attending the program. When evaluating behavioural changes, sufficient time needs to have passed as participants may not have had the opportunity to put their new knowledge and skills into action. A further strategy for evaluating behavioural change is to gather information from friends and associates. As with *learning,* changes in behaviour can be measured before and after the educational intervention. It is useful to evaluate at another time down the track to determine whether behavioural changes have been sustained (Kirkpatrick, 1994).

The final level of the evaluation process measures the **Results** of the program. While most educational interventions have objectives that state intended results, such as reducing domestic violence or improving client safety, measuring results tends to be the most difficult stage. According to Kirkpatrick (1994:26) *...trainers must start with desired results and then determine what behaviour is needed to accomplish them.*

As with behaviour change, results can be measured pre and post training and time needs to elapse before results can be detected. The difficulty of evaluating at this level is proving whether the results observed are directly from the educational intervention and not from other external factors that may contribute to changes identified. Most evaluations of educational interventions rely on single group pre and post tests to identify results. As Kirkpatrick (1990:70) upholds *...be satisfied with evidence, because proof is usually impossible to get.*

Example 1: Reaction Sheet

THINGS I LIKED:

THINGS I DIDN'T LIKE:

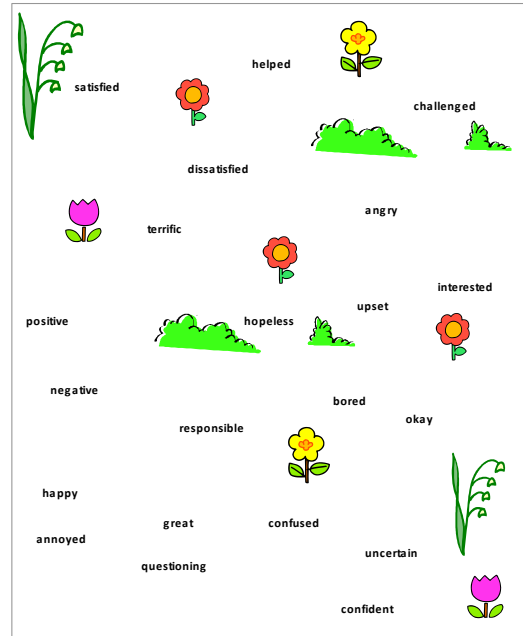THINGS I WANT MORE OF:

THINGS I LEARNED:

How I feel now _____

My impression of the day (please tick somewhere along the line):

| Very useful | Okay | Useless |

Example 2: Field of Words

Explain to the group that you will hand out a sheet with words written on it that describe feelings and reactions. Ask the participants to circle the words that best describe their feelings about the session or program. They can add their own words if they can't find suitable words on the sheet. Collect the sheets when they are completed.

satisfied

helped

challenged

dissatisfied

angry

terrific

interested

positive   hopeless   upset

negative

bored   okay

responsible

happy

great   confused

annoyed

questioning

uncertain

confident

Example 3: Review Sheet

Mark an **X** on the continuum at the point that best describes your reaction.

How satisfied are you with this session?

not satisfied   very satisfied

Was the subject matter:

boring?   interesting?

COMMENTS

What issues, questions or concerns would you like to include in the next session?

Example 4: Reaction Sheet

Please give us your honest reactions and comments. They will help us to evaluate this program and improve future programs.

Leader: _____

Subject: _____

1. How do you rate the subject? (interest, benefit, etc)

   Comments and Suggestions
   - ❏ Excellent   _____
   - ❏ Very good   _____
   - ❏ Good   _____
   - ❏ Fair   _____
   - ❏ Poor   _____

2. How do you rate the facilitator/trainer/leader? (knowledge of subject matter, ability to communicate, etc)

   Comments and Suggestions
   - ❏ Excellent   _____
   - ❏ Very good   _____
   - ❏ Good   _____
   - ❏ Fair   _____
   - ❏ Poor   _____

3. How do you rate the facilities? (comfort, convenience, etc)

   Comments and Suggestions
   - ❏ Excellent   _____
   - ❏ Very good   _____
   - ❏ Good   _____
   - ❏ Fair   _____
   - ❏ Poor   _____

4. What would have improved the program?

   _____
   _____
   _____

Example 5: Reaction Sheet

Leader: _____

Subject: _____

1. How pertinent was the subject to your needs and interests?

   ❑ Not at all   ❑ To some extent   ❑ Very much

2. How was the ratio of presentation to discussion?

   ❑ Too much presentation   ❑ Okay ❑ Too much discussion

3. How do you rate the leader?

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
a. In stating objectives	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
b. In keeping the session alive and interesting	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
c. In communicating	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
d. In using aids	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
e. In maintaining a friendly and helpful attitude	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

4. What is your overall rating of the session/program?

Comments and Suggestions

❑ Excellent   _____

❑ Very good   _____

❑ Good   _____

❑ Fair   _____

❑ Poor   _____

5. What would have made the session/program more effective?

_____

_____

_____

Example 6: Reaction Sheet

Please complete this form to let us know your reaction to the program. Your input will help us to evaluate our efforts, and your comments and suggestions will help us to plan future programs that meet your needs and interests.

Instructions: Please circle the appropriate number after each statement and then add your comments.

	High				Low
1. How do you rate the subject content? (interesting, helpful, etc) **Comments:**	5	4	3	2	1
2. How do you rate the trainer? (preparation, communication, etc) **Comments:**	5	4	3	2	1
3. How do you rate the facilities? (comfort, convenience, etc) **Comments:**	5	4	3	2	1
4. How do you rate the schedule? (time, length, etc) **Comments:**	5	4	3	2	1
5. How would you rate the program as an experience to help you?	5	4	3	2	1

6. What topics were most beneficial?

7. What suggestions do you have for future programs?

Example 7: Program Evaluation

Reaction to Program

In the questions that follow, please circle the number which closely corresponds with your view.

1. To what degree did the program contain information and/or skills that were:

Irrelevant	1	2	3	4	5	Relevant
Very familiar	1	2	3	4	5	New material
Poor quality	1	2	3	4	5	High quality

2. To what extent were the goals and objectives of the program achieved?

Very little   1   2   3   4   5   Great deal

3. Was there balance between discussions/activities?

Not well balanced   1   2   3   4   5   Very well balanced

4. How well presented was the information?

Not well at all   1   2   3   4   5   Very well

5. How much did you enjoy the program?

Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   Great deal

6. How suitable was the time allocation for the program?

Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   Great deal

7. How suitable was the venue for the program?

Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   Great   deal

Example 8: Program Evaluation

Please write answers to the following questions in the space provided.

1. What benefits do you think you have gained from participating in this program?

2. What do you think were the best features of the program?

3. Are there any comments, criticisms, etc you would like to make about the program? (Any suggestions about how it could be developed to better meet your needs, ie expansion of information covered, other materials required, topics that may link.)

Name (optional): _____

Date: _____

Questionnaires

Questionnaires for evaluation are best used in conjunction with other techniques so that participants and facilitators receive both written and other kinds of feedback.

• Use short questionnaires throughout a program at appropriate junctures in the agenda.

• Design different questionnaires for different purposes (eg, feedback on the program, feedback on learning for learners, feedback on the physical environment) rather than one omnibus sheet of questions.

• Design a short questionnaire that can be used twice in order to make before and after comparisons of changes in understanding, knowledge and feelings.

• Keep questionnaires short with a small number of well-focused questions.

It is usually best to reserve time during, or at the end of the session, for the participants to fill in their questionnaires. [Expect a low rate of return if you hand out questionnaires to be taken away for future response]. If there is time, ask for a quick go-around for answers to a few of the main questions. Or break into small groups, and have the groups discuss their answers.

Sample questions for written evaluations

Below are samples of questions, which can be selected and/or adapted to specific situations. The questions can equally be applied to a single session or an overall program. In some programs it is the cumulative results of individual session evaluations which together contribute to the final program evaluation. The questions have been grouped to address particular evaluation issues:

OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS:

• Were the objectives of the session/program fulfilled? Why? or Why not?

• Were individual/group/agency expectations met? Why? or Why not?

• Who contributed significantly towards achieving the expectations? How?

CONTENT:

• What was good about the session/program? Why? What wasn't? Why?

• How could it have been improved?

• What was today's/the program's most valuable experience? Why was it valuable?

• What part of today's program could have been strengthened? How?

• With only half a day (or whatever) remaining we should …..

PARTICIPATION

• What role did I/others play in this session/program?

• What were my/the various contributions to the group/program? Were they useful?

• Are there any problems in the group/program at this stage? What needs to change?

FEELINGS

- When I first walked into the room ….. / joined the program…..
- Now that the session/program is over I wish …..
- My first impression of the group was …..
- My feeling towards the group now is …..
- I wish we did more …………. I wish we did less ……….

FACILITATORS

- Rate the facilitators according to their ability to work with a group, to assess the group's energy level, to help the group make decisions, to impart knowledge, to be flexible to group needs, etc.

ACTION AND FOLLOW-UP

- What would I like to see done in a future session/program?
- Is there any action I want to take as the result of this session?
- Because of this session I am going to …….

LOGISTICS

Please comment with one or two words such as *excessive*, *good*, *slight*, *poor*. (List only the appropriate categories.)

• Noise	• Ventilation	• Seating	• Fatigue
• Light	• Space	• Temperature	• Meals
• Transportation	• Childcare	• Breaks	• Recreation

Pre and Post Testing

Pre and post questionnaires are an important tool for assessing changes in attitudes, behaviour and skills that occur as the result of an extended educational program. In some programs the pre and post assessment can be undertaken by telephone interview; however, if it is not possible to allocate a worker to this role, it can be administered by written questionnaire.

The pre course questionnaire could be sent to participants prior to the course or given to them on the first or second night of the program. It is usual to administer the post course questionnaire at the last session or in the two or three weeks following the completion of the course. This could be done with a pre-paid envelope being provided for each participant. It should be noted that there is a higher response rate if the questionnaires are completed 'on the spot' rather than being posted. If posted questionnaires are preferred then providing a pre-paid envelope increases the response rate.

It is usual to ask questions about initial expectations and then check whether these were met at the conclusion of the program. In addition it is useful to ascertain if the educational program actually brought about any changes in skills, knowledge and/or behaviour.

The value of a pre test is that it gives a clear indication of the initial expectations of participants along with a self-assessment of their level of knowledge and/or skill prior to commencing the course. This knowledge can help facilitators to pitch the course at the most appropriate level and to ensure that the information and skills required are covered.

Checking at the end of the course will also ascertain the overall level of satisfaction and change that is made during the course.

A further dimension can be added by undertaking a follow-up questionnaire three to six months following the completion of the course. This can ascertain the extent to which the skills and knowledge developed during the course have been put into practice.

Example 9: Pre & Post Program Questionnaire

Participant's first name: _____

Program Facilitator's name: _____

Answer the questions as honestly as you can. This is not a test, nor are they trick questions. If you don't understand what a question means, or you are unsure of the way to answer a question, please ask for help. Thanks for your interest and participation in this program.

1. On the scale provided, circle the number which best shows how you feel about yourself as a person.

Not much   **Great**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2.   Answer the following statements by circling the number on the scale which best shows what you believe to be true.

   I am only being violent if I hit someone

No Way   **Absolutely**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

   What happens in a family, no matter what it is, is no-one else's business

No Way   **Absolutely**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

   Sometimes being violent is the only way to sort things out

No Way   **Absolutely**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3.   Is violence OK in some situations?   **Yes/No**
      If yes, please explain:

      _____

      _____

4.   If I have a problem with someone, I:

	Never		Sometimes		Always
Try and talk it out	1	2	3	4	5
Avoid them	1	2	3	4	5
Show them who is boss	1	2	3	4	5
Tray talking but then find I have to fight it out	1	2	3	4	5

   If I were having a problem, I would ask for help from:

	Never		Sometimes		Often
My close friends	1	2	3	4	5
My teachers	1	2	3	4	5
School counsellor	1	2	3	4	5
Family	1	2	3	4	5
Sort it out myself	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Caraniche Services on behalf of DEETYA, Jesuit Social Services and Centacare

The Meta Evaluation of *Partnerships*

The meta evaluation of *Partnerships* will:

• document the range of activities undertaken under the Partnerships initiative;

• evaluate the effectiveness of the sum of the individual initiatives in developing new ways of preventing and responding to domestic violence, promoting good practice and disseminating knowledge and information about domestic violence;

• identify gaps in knowledge where further work is required; and

• make recommendations about future directions for national action to prevent and respond to domestic violence.

What is a Meta Evaluation?

Meta evaluation is a complex process which is about building a credible body of knowledge greater than the sum of the parts. The individual evaluations are a rich source of data for a meta analysis which examines the relationships between findings across various studies. Drawn originally from medical science, and then applied to psychology, meta analysis attempts to aggregate data across studies, but more latterly in the social sciences, builds theory and knowledge from a range of studies. Meta evaluation can be used for a range of different evaluation processes, in addition to aggregating data and building theory. It can be used to establish common technical approaches to data collection, to establish common and shared processes, and to inform policy direction. There are four key aspects within a meta evaluation:

1.   Technical Analysis

• planning and design of tools

• develop mechanisms for data collection

• aggregation of funding on a cumulative basis

• cross comparisons

• developing empirical 'building blocks'

2.   Process

• developing a national evaluation network

• consulting across projects/jurisdictions

• interchange of ideas - providing a 'clearing house' function

• providing an integrative approach

3.   Theory Development

• connecting the 'building blocks'

• identifying what is known and what works

• analysing what is relevant (not all information is relevant)

• identifying:
  – causal relationships
  – gaps in knowledge
  – 'best' practice

• problem solving

4.   Social Policy Input

• answering key questions, including:

  – what does this mean for current practice?

  – what needs to change?

  – how might this occur?

  – who needs to be engaged?

  – what further research/information is required?

What does this mean for *Partnerships?*

The meta evaluation will comprise:

• Literature review (report *Current Perspectives on Domestic Violence* published and available through DAS Distributions)

• Consultation with the evaluators of the individual *Partnerships* Projects

• Monitoring and co-ordination of all individual evaluations;

• A process evaluation, including a narrative of the whole program and its evolution;

• Workshops to identify emerging learnings from the evaluations and within the sector.

• Identification of Best Practice approaches in services across Australia.

• Analysis of data as it emerges from the various evaluations.

• Circulation of Bulletins to highlight the learnings from each of the evaluations and to ensure that there is maximum sharing of information across the projects.

• Overall analysis of all data

• Preparation and presentation of reports to government.

References & Suggested Reading

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