A MAP OF USES

Impact Evaluation

FOR YOUR PROJECT, YOUR NEEDS, AND YOUR BUDGET

For use by evaluation practitioners

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité

AFD
AGENCE FRANÇAISE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT

QUADRANT CONSEIL

SDS strategic design scenarios

Why a “map of uses” for impact evaluation?

Discussions on impact evaluations often revolve around methodology. Here, we look at impact evaluation from a different angle, by looking first at what such evaluations can be used for, rather than the approaches used to conduct them.

This impact evaluation map of uses has been produced for evaluation officers, to help them understand the nature of evaluation needs and to propose possible solutions to their counterparts.

We have designed it as an educational tool for use in evaluation departments, to stimulate reflection on the actual uses that internal services make of evaluations (and especially impact evaluations) and to boost their collective capacity to propose relevant responses to evaluation needs.

This map of uses is the result of joint research conducted in 2021–2022 by Agence Française de Développement, Quadrant Conseil, and Strategic Design Scenarios.

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Defend choices

“Defend and justify our choices before decision-makers or partners and revise them if necessary.”

Inform strategy

“Stimulate strategic reflection by management (at operative, executive, or top level).”

Learn lessons

“Learn lessons and put good practices to work when carrying out interventions.”

Better appraise and design

“Provide better insights at the appraisal phase (better ex-ante evaluation of projects) and improve the design of future interventions (wider range of methods, feasibility, etc.).”

Support discussions

“Substantiate internal and external debates on the best policy guidelines or ways to solve development problems.”

Strategic uses

Internal uses or uses that target institutional partners, to support sectoral policies and strategies

Continuous - improvement uses

Primarily internal uses, to improve future projects and interventions

Management - support uses

Primarily internal uses, to better monitor and manage ongoing projects and interventions

Dialogue - support uses

Mostly external uses, aimed at strengthening or stimulating partnerships in the projects and policies supported

Monitor over time

“Help in project implementation monitoring, especially by providing the data needed to make informed choices.”

Dialogue with partners

“Facilitate dialogue with partners, in particular by building a relationship of trust.”

Support decision-making

“Support decision-making on appraisal, progress, or renewal of projects.”

Reflect with the team

"Facilitate reflection within teams on the purpose and quality of the action, by providing internal feedback."

Strengthen capacities

“Help strengthen the capacity of the stakeholders involved.”

The following persons helped develop this map of uses: Thomas Delahais, Agathe Devaux-Spatarakis, François Jégou, Jade Joviado, Camille Laporte, Léa Macias, Fiora Noël, Karen Rousseau, Claire Zanuso.

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Primarily internal uses, to improve future projects and interventions

Defend choices

"Defend and justify our choices before decision-makers or partners, and revise them if necessary."

Support discussions

Contribute to internal and external debates on the best policy guidelines or ways to solve development problems."

QUALITATIVE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

- Delineate the conditions to be met in order to achieve the desired changes
- Better judge the relevance of interventions according to the observed conditions

ETHNOGRAPHIC EVALUATION

- Understand contexts in depth and adapt to them

CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

- Qualify & characterize how the intervention contributes to systemic issues
- Identify contributions or lack thereof, in case of uncertainty
- Collectively work toward the desired changes and the means to contribute to them

REALIST EVALUATION

PROCESS TRACING

- Assess the relevance of interventions according to their ability to trigger certain mechanisms in certain contexts
- Systematically test causal links in a variety of contexts
- Involve local stakeholders in determining the contexts,mecha-nisms, and results

COUNTERFACTUAL EVALUATIONS

- Justify the impact of interventions, especially innovative ones where much is at stake
- Establish impact data collection that is rigorous, systematic, and sustainable

OUTCOME HARVESTING

- Better understand the outcomes that can be obtained from an intervention depending on its context
- Start from changes observed by local stakeholders rather than from the intervention

Better appraise and design

"Provide better insights at the appraisal phase (better ex-ante evaluation of projects) and improve the design of future interventions (wider range of methods, feasibility, etc.)."

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"Help in project implementation monitoring, especially by providing the data needed to make informed choices."

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"Facilitate dialogue with partners, in particular by building a relationship of trust."

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"Facilitate reflection within teams on the purpose and quality of the action, by providing internal feedback."

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

- Highlight the changes that matter to people locally and how the intervention contributes to those changes

Management - support uses

Primarily internal uses, to better monitor and manage ongoing projects and interventions

Dialogue - support uses

Mostly external uses, aimed at strengthening or stimulating partnerships in the projects and policies supported

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What are impact evaluations for?

This map of uses is divided into four quadrants, each one devoted to one of four main types of uses identified during a participatory exercise by AFD evaluation officers and personnel from different AFD departments (thematic divisions, national field offices, etc.). The exercise, which lasted several months, helped show how AFD personnel actually used the evaluations. The uses were in fact sometimes different from those generally highlighted in evaluations (and in impact evaluations in particular).

Strategic uses

Internal uses or uses that target institutional partners, to support sectoral policies and strategies

Continued - improvement uses

Primarily internal uses, to improve future projects and interventions

Management - support uses

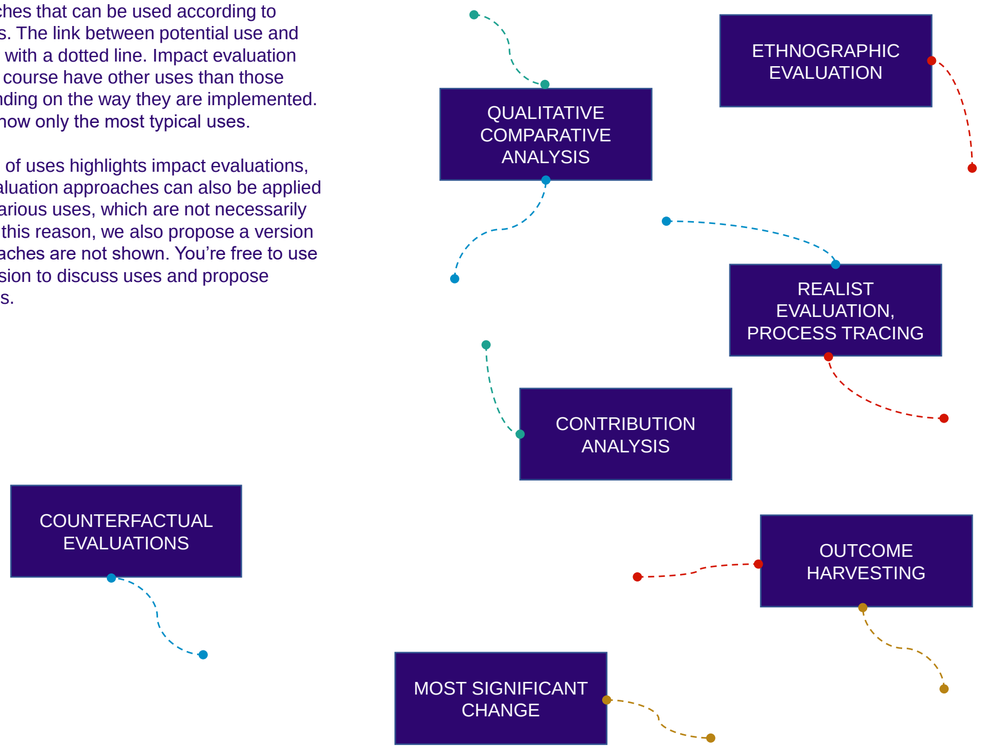
Mainly internal uses, to better monitor and manage ongoing projects and interventions

Dialogue - support uses

Mostly external uses, aimed at strengthening or stimulating partnerships in the projects and policies supported

For each of these uses, we have proposed several impact evaluation approaches that can be used according to contexts and needs. The link between potential use and approach is shown with a dotted line. Impact evaluation approaches can of course have other uses than those shown here, depending on the way they are implemented. We've chosen to show only the most typical uses.

Moreover, the map of uses highlights impact evaluations, but many other evaluation approaches can also be applied to address these various uses, which are not necessarily impact issues. For this reason, we also propose a version in which the approaches are not shown. You're free to use this unmapped version to discuss uses and propose specific approaches.

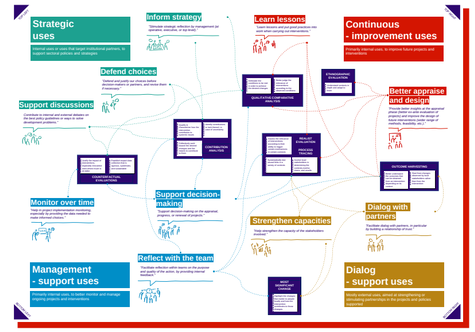


HOW TO USE THIS MAP?

Evaluation does not start out useful; it becomes useful. Those who commission the evaluation, as well as the partners involved, often have only a vague idea at the start of how the evaluation may be useful to them. For this reason, it's often up to the evaluation officers to facilitate this initial work of explaining the potential uses. The map of uses is thus designed as one way of discussing the potential uses of the evaluation with those who commission it.

The unmapped version can help in positioning: What is the purpose of the evaluation? Is it to be used internally or externally? Is it intended for the short term (e.g., to make a funding decision), or rather for the long term, to fuel future strategy planning or learn from one's errors? The types of uses help not only to position the evaluation, but also to understand in more detail the context of why it was commissioned and its role in the institution's divisions and units' plans.

To start with uses means opening up a range of possible evaluation approaches. This is where the second map of uses comes in to play, as it helps us to identify approaches that apply to several uses and then decide on the most suitable choices. It also shows that a single approach cannot apply to all uses.
The map of uses can thus help us in the choices that must be made at this level.



HOW TO READ THIS MAP?

1. Categories of uses

Description of uses

2. Type of use

"explanation"

3. Advantages of the approach for these uses — IMPACT EVALUATION APPROACHES

How do I get started with this document?

Position the A3 sheets in front of you using the triangular marks in the corners to form a map of uses.

Depending on the use you are interested in, **read the corresponding approach sheets or cases**.

The following persons helped develop this map of uses: Thomas Delahais, Agathe Devaux-Spatarakis, François Jégou, Jade Joviado, Camille Laporte, Léa Macias, Fiora Noël, Karen Rousseau, Claire Zanuso.

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COUNTERFACTUAL EVALUATIONS

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Randomized Controlled Trials

Counterfactual Evaluation

Does the intervention achieve the desired results?

What are randomized controlled trials (RCTs)?

RCTs are a type of counterfactual approach according to which, in order to estimate a program's impact, we must compare changes observed in individuals who benefited from an intervention, to the changes we would have observed in the absence of that intervention.

This counterfactual situation (i.e., a world in which the intervention did not occur) is made by randomly selecting potential participants prior to program implementation, dividing them into two groups (beneficiaries vs. non-beneficiaries), and comparing them over time.

The steps of an RCT

1. **Inception**: Determine the outcome to be studied, the indicators used, the units that will be compared (individuals, groups, etc.) and randomly select the beneficiary group and the control group.
2. **Data collection**: Gather data from the beneficiaries group and non-beneficiaries group before and after the intervention. This data on their characteristics and indicators will be used to judge the success of the intervention.
3. **Analysis**: Conduct a comparative statistical analysis of the changes in the two groups.
4. **Results**: Quantitative estimate of the average outcome of the program.

Are the conditions in place to implement this approach?

Available data

- Easy access to a large number of selected beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries is required at the beginning of their participation, at the end of their participation, and even over the longer term.

Technical skills

- Mastery is required in statistical analysis tools and in conducting surveys of beneficiaries using a questionnaire.

Type of intervention for which this approach is appropriate

- The intervention targets a specific and easily quantifiable change.
- The intervention is likely to be the main cause of the observed change.
- The intervention is very simple, with a short intervention chain and a direct relationship with the beneficiaries.
- Ideally, the intervention is co-developed with the evaluation team, so that implementation is adapted to the data-collection protocol.
- The evaluation was designed before implementation of the intervention.

Priority data-collection tools

- Questionnaire survey of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries before and after their participation.
- Can be backed up by analysis of available databases on both groups.

An approach recommended for

- **Strategic uses**: to justify the impact of interventions, and especially innovative ones where much is at stake.
- **Management-support uses**: to establish collection of impact data that is rigorous, systematic, and sustainable.

COUNTERFACTUAL EVALUATIONS

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Quasi-experimental methods

Counterfactual evaluations

Does the intervention achieve the desired results?

What are quasi-experimental methods?

According to quasi-experimental methods, in order to estimate a program's impact, we must compare the changes observed in individuals, groups, or ecosystems that benefit from an intervention and the changes observed among those that don't benefit from it. This counterfactual situation (i.e., without an intervention) is reconstructed "artificially" by establishing a comparison group whose characteristics are as close as possible to those of the beneficiaries group. These groups can be formed by different statistical methods.

The steps of the quasi-experimental method

1. **Inception:** Determine the outcome to be studied and the indicators used, analyze the characteristics of the beneficiaries, identify the variables to be taken into account in establishing the comparison group. Establish the comparison group.
2. **Data collection:** Gather information on the characteristics of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and enter the selected indicators.
3. **Analysis:** Conduct statistical tests to establish the comparability of the two groups (make statistical adjustments if necessary) and carry out comparative analysis of changes in the two groups.
4. **Results**: Quantitative estimate of the average outcome of the program.

Are the conditions in place to implement this approach?

Available data

- Easy access to a large number of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries is required, in order to survey them and obtain acceptable statistical power.
- There must be good-quality databases on a comparison group and on beneficiary characteristics.
- For some methods, specific data needs will apply.

Technical skills

- Mastery of statistical analysis and data processing tools of various types (surveys, geospatial data, etc.) is required.

Type of intervention for which this approach is appropriate

- The intervention targets a specific and easily quantifiable change.
- The intervention studied is likely to be the main cause of the observed change.
- The intervention is very simple, with a short intervention chain and a direct relationship with the beneficiaries.
- The intervention, the impact indicator, and the characteristics of the beneficiaries can be measured by geospatial data.

Priority data-collection tools

- Questionnaire survey of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.
- Database analyses on the comparison group and on the beneficiaries (if available).
- Collection and analysis of geospatial data.

An approach recommended for

- **Strategic uses**: to justify the impact of interventions, and especially innovative ones where much is at stake.
- **Management-support uses**: to establish collection of impact data that is rigorous, systematic, and sustainable.

Geospatial Impact Evaluation

A burgeoning trend with a number of benefits

What is Geospatial Impact Evaluation (GIE)?

GIE uses georeferenced intervention data and impact indicators to evaluate the impact of a project. Quasi-experimental methods are usually used for the analysis.
The main advantage of using GIEs is the growing availability of different types of geospatial data in numerous sectors, generated at low aggregation levels and at regular intervals around the world.
GIEs are particularly suited for evaluating the impact of projects or portfolios of projects with an environmental aspect (land use, deforestation, agricultural productivity, air pollution, etc.).

The steps of a GIE

1. **Inception:** Verify that the indicators and variables used to create the intervention and comparison groups are georeferenced. Define the geographic zone influenced by the intervention. Establish the comparison group.
2. **Data collection:** Identify geospatial data on impact indicators and characteristics of the two groups and match them to each other as well as to the intervention and control area.
3. **Analysis:** Conduct statistical tests to establish the comparability of the two groups (make statistical adjustments if necessary) and carry out comparative analysis of changes in the two groups.
4. **Results:** Quantitative estimate of the average outcome of the program.

Are the conditions in place to implement this approach?

Available data

- Georeferenced variables and impact indicators.
- Temporally and spatially well-defined evaluated units (households, neighborhoods, zones).
- Geographical zones not exposed to the intervention, or exposed at a different point in time.

Data access

- Satellite imagery data: easily accessed and are often free, collected remotely in high resolution and at frequent intervals.
- Other data sources: georeferenced household surveys, collaborative mapping of critical infrastructure (ex. OpenStreetMap), telecommunication data records (ex. Call Detail Record).
- Intervention data: obtained through the entities that funded the intervention (governments, donors, research organizations).

Technical skills

- Mastery of statistical analysis using various types of georeferenced data.

Type of intervention for which this approach is appropriate

- When the intervention aims at a change on a well-defined territory, on the environment, on land use...
- When it is complex or very expensive to obtain data.
- When the intervention is in areas that are difficult to access.
- When the object of study is a portfolio of projects.

Examples

- Measure the impact of a forest management plan on deforestation by comparing deforestation in managed concessions to that in unmanaged concessions. Deforestation is measured with satellite image data.
- Measure the impact of a new subway line on urban economic development in the nearby area. Economic development is measured by the satellite nighttime light data.

QUALITATIVE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS (QCA)

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Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA)

What conditions help achieve the desired results?

What is qualitative comparative analysis (QCA)?

According to the QCA approach, an intervention never produces the desired outcome by itself alone. Rather, it's a combination of conditions accompanying the intervention that will help the results to be achieved. The aim of this approach is to identify both the internal and external conditions of the intervention via a systematic and statistical test of variables.

The steps of QCA

1. **Inception:** Identify a limited number of the project's internal or external conditions likely to contribute to its success or failure. Target a key outcome of the project for analysis (e.g., "access to health care").
2. **Data collection:** Choose a variety of "cases" (20 to 50) to test these conditions. Depending on the type of project, a "case" might be a beneficiary individual or organization, or a geographic area. For each "case," it will be determined whether or not the key outcome has been achieved, and information related to the achievement of each condition as determined in the inception phase will be provided.
3. **Analysis:** Conduct a statistical analysis, i.e. a search for configurations of conditions related to the presence or absence of the expected outcome, as well as a qualitative analysis to explain the configurations of the conditions among themselves.
4. **Results**: make it possible to identify the configurations of necessary and/or sufficient conditions related to the outcomes and associated explanations.

Are the conditions in place to implement this approach?

Available data

- Assumptions can easily be made on a limited number of conditions that are likely to contribute to the success of the intervention.
- Sources (persons or documents) to test conditions must be easily accessible and available.

Technical skills

- The evaluation team must have expertise in statistical and qualitative analysis and be able to implement similar protocols for all the cases studied.

Type of intervention for which this approach is appropriate

- A specific outcome is targeted by the intervention and is easily measurable.
- There is significant variability in outcomes depending on the context.

Priority data-collection tools

- Questionnaire survey of the "cases".
- Analysis of documents.
- In-depth studies with a sample of cases: field observations, individual interviews.

An approach recommended for

- **Strategic uses:** to better judge the relevance of interventions according to the conditions observed.
- **Continuous-improvement uses:** to characterize the conditions to be met in order to achieve the desired changes.

Contribution analysis

How and to what degree has the intervention helped to achieve the expected changes?

What is a contribution analysis?

According to contribution analysis, in complex situations, an intervention never produces the desired impacts by itself alone. Identifying the contribution of an intervention requires knowledge of other factors and their role, as well as their relationship to the intervention. Contribution analysis is especially suitable when it's uncertain to what degree an intervention has contributed to the observed changes, especially in multi-stakeholder institutional contexts (on a program or policy scale).

The steps of contribution analysis

1. **Inception:** Working out questions about program impacts and developing a theory of change.
2. **Data collection:** Documenting the observed changes. Iterative development of plausible claims about the contribution of the intervention and other factors that may explain the observed changes. The most plausible claims are then subjected to increasingly rigorous empirical tests, so as to gradually increase the degree of confidence in the results obtained.
3. **Analysis:** Progressive contextualization of the observations relating to the contribution by and judgment of the role of the intervention in the observed changes.
4. **Results:** A short story about the program's contribution is produced.

Are the conditions in place to implement this approach?

Available data

- Stakeholders must have a familiarity with the intervention and its context that is sufficient enough for them to develop a plausible theory of change.
- There must be a variety of accessible sources to characterize changes and contributions.

Technical skills

- The evaluation team must be able to implement a structured, systematic, and rigorous approach, as well as master "theory-based" approaches.

Type of intervention for which this approach is appropriate

- The intervention seeks to modify complex systems, but it is uncertain to what degree it has contributed to the observed changes.

Priority data-collection tools

- Documentary analysis / literature review.
- Statistical analyses (measurement of changes).
- Case studies.
- One-on-one interviews, workshops.

An approach recommended for

- **Strategic uses:** to show whether or not the intervention has contributed when there is uncertainty, and to qualify & characterize how the intervention contributed to systemic issues.
- **Management-support uses:** to collectively develop the desired changes and the means to help reach them.

REALIST EVALUATION

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Realist Evaluation

Through what mechanisms can the intervention achieve the desired results?

What is a realist evaluation?

According to realist evaluation, programs produce the desired outcomes thanks to favorable “configurations” between the beneficiaries, the contexts in which they occur, and their implementation. This approach is based on the social sciences and seeks to explain why an intervention works with varying degrees of success, depending on the various contexts and target audiences.

The steps of realist evaluation

1. **Inception:** Choose the outcomes that one wishes to study, making assumptions about the mechanisms at work and the conditions (variables) likely to occur in these mechanisms.
2. **Data collection:** Gather data in several stages, by alternating quantitative and qualitative approaches if possible, in order to clarify the assumptions and then test them on a larger number of beneficiaries.
3. **Analysis:** Analyze all the data collected to characterize contexts and mechanisms, and identify outcome and/or beneficiary typologies.
4. **Results:** Worked out in the form of configurations of mechanisms/contexts/results (what works, for whom, how, and under what conditions).

Are the conditions in place to implement this approach?

Available data

- Pre-existing (scientific) knowledge is required of the mechanisms likely to work in this program.
- Privileged access to the implementers and designers of the program is required in order to analyze the mechanisms implemented.
- Privileged access to certain beneficiaries is required, in order to conduct in-depth interviews.

Technical skills

- The evaluation team must be familiar with social science concepts and theories, and of the protocols of realist evaluation if possible.

Type of intervention for which this approach is appropriate

- Interventions targeting changes in beneficiaries’ behavior, through unrestrictive forms of action (e.g., awareness-raising, incentives, etc.).

Priority data-collection tools

- Questionnaire survey of the beneficiaries.
- In-depth interviews with beneficiaries and operators.
- Analysis of documents.
- In-depth case studies.

An approach recommended for

- **Continuous-improvement uses:** to systematically test causal links in a variety of contexts.
- **Management-support uses:** to assess the relevance of interventions according to their ability to trigger certain mechanisms in certain contexts.
- **Dialogue-support uses:** to involve local stakeholders in determining the contexts, mechanisms, and results.

PROCESS TRACING

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Process tracing

Through what pathways can the intervention achieve the desired results?

What is process tracing?

Process tracing is a theory-based approach that focuses on the causal pathways linking an intervention and an expected outcome. In this approach, the pathways are gradually contextualized with regard to the results of systematic empirical tests.

The steps of process tracing

1. **Inception:** Choose the outcomes to be studied, and make assumptions about the causal pathways at work and the conditions (variables) likely to occur in these pathways.
2. **Data collection:** Develop a set of empirical tests for each of the causal pathways tested in the evaluation. Collect information to feed these empirical tests. This collection is usually iterative, occurring as the pathways are better specified.
3. **Analysis:** Characterize the strength of the evidence in support of the various mechanisms studied, to validate or reject them.
4. **Results:** Identification of causal pathways explaining how an intervention can lead to an expected outcome.

Are the conditions in place to implement this approach?

Available data

- Pre-existing knowledge is required on the pathways likely to work in this program.
- Privileged access to the intervention's stakeholders is required, in order to analyze the pathways.
- Access to the intervention's beneficiaries is required.

Technical skills

- The evaluation team must be capable of developing systematic empirical tests.

Type of intervention for which this approach is appropriate

- Intervention targeting changes in beneficiaries' behavior, through unrestrictive forms of action (e.g., awareness-raising, incentives, etc.).

Priority data-collection tools

- Questionnaire survey of the beneficiaries.
- In-depth interviews with beneficiaries and operators.
- Analysis of documents.

An approach recommended for

- **Continuous-improvement uses:** to systematically test causal links in a variety of contexts.
- **Management-support uses:** to assess the relevance of interventions according to their ability to trigger certain mechanisms in certain contexts.
- **Dialogue-support uses:** to involve local stakeholders in determining the contexts, mechanisms, and results.

OUTCOME HARVESTING

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Outcome Harvesting

What outcomes can be expected from this program in the various contexts of intervention?

What is Outcome Harvesting?

Outcome harvesting starts with changes identified in the field (be they intended or not, or desirable or not), sometimes in different intervention contexts. It then works backwards to find out whether and how the intervention under evaluation is likely to have contributed to them.

The steps of the Outcome Harvesting method

1. **Inception:** Establish a list of changes identified in the field, in consultation with the program stakeholders.
2. **Data collection:** Round out and quantify these changes using a variety of sources and establish their links with the intervention under study through stakeholders' testimonies and/or other data sources.
3. **Analysis:** Analyze all the data collected, in order to characterize the changes according to the types of beneficiaries and/or contexts and establish the degree to which the intervention contributes to them, through systematic substantiation work.
4. **Results:** Consolidation of a list of expected outcomes from a program, according to the contexts of the intervention.

Are the conditions in place to implement this approach?

Available data

- Privileged access to the intervention's beneficiaries and implementers is required.

Technical skills

- Mastery of qualitative and participatory data-collection tools is required.

Type of intervention for which this approach is appropriate

- Interventions for which there is great uncertainty about their expected outcomes and about the cause-and-effect relationships (e.g., call for projects with a wide range of interventions).
- The intervention must have been in place for a sufficient period of time and be likely to have outcomes that are observable for the beneficiaries or other observers.

Priority data-collection tools

- Individual or group interviews with beneficiaries and other stakeholders connected to the intervention.
- Questionnaire survey (if a large number of beneficiaries).
- Documentary analysis.

An approach recommended for

- **Continuous-improvement and management uses:** to better understand the outcomes that can be obtained from an intervention, according to its context.
- **Dialogue-support uses:** to begin with changes observed by local stakeholders rather than from the intervention.

Most Significant Change

What changes matter most to the beneficiaries?

What is the Most Significant Change method?

The Most Significant Change method is a participatory approach based on gathering beneficiaries' expressed views about the perceived impacts of an intervention and on ranking them by importance.

The steps of the Most Significant Change method

1. **Inception:** Make beneficiaries of an intervention aware of this participatory approach and identify areas for change to be investigated.
2. **Data collection:** Gather beneficiaries' comments on the most significant changes they have identified. Prioritize these changes by different stakeholder groups, to keep the "most significant." Collect supplementary information on these changes, in one or several stages.
3. **Analysis:** Analyze all the data collected and identify the most significant changes in terms of their substantiation through the data collected.
4. **Results:** Description of the main changes for the beneficiaries.

Are the conditions in place to implement this approach?

Available data:
- There must be privileged access to beneficiaries, who are ideally already familiar with participatory approaches.

Technical skills:
- The evaluation team must have a mastery of participatory techniques and the local language(s).

Type of intervention for which this approach is appropriate:
- For when there are uncertainties about the expected outcomes of the intervention, but the project is still likely to have produced significant changes.
- The intervention has been established for a sufficient period of time, enabling assessment of its outcomes.

Priority data-collection tools

- Individual interviews with the beneficiaries.
- Facilitation of focus groups.
- Questionnaire survey of the beneficiaries.
- Analysis of existing documents.

An approach recommended for

- **Management-support and dialogue uses:** to demonstrate the changes that matter to people locally and how the intervention contributes to those changes.

ETHNOGRAPHIC EVALUATION

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Ethnographic approaches

Is the intervention adapted to the contexts and cultures of the beneficiaries?

What are the ethnographic approaches?

Ethnographic approaches provide in-depth analyses of the contexts and cultures in which interventions are implemented. Based on the specific characteristics of these contexts, they analyze the outcomes of the interventions on the structures, systems, or individuals of these societies.

The steps of the ethnographic approach

1. **Inception:** Identify the main contextual or cultural aspects likely to influence the intervention's implementation or outcomes. Determine the field of investigation (what physical areas and what groups of individuals will be the subject of the in-depth study?).
2. **Data collection:** Organize immersion periods in the field to collect and analyze data on the contexts and cultures and on their interaction with the intervention.
3. **Analysis:** Analyze all the data collected in case study monographs.
4. **Results:** Final delivery in descriptive and analytical form (portraits of beneficiaries, descriptions of societal structures, etc.), and explanation of certain positive or negative effects of the intervention.

Are the conditions in place to implement this approach?

Available data

- Privileged access to the field is needed, to conduct investigations over time by becoming part of the communities.

Technical skills

- The evaluation team must have expertise in conducting qualitative methods (skills in ethnology), proficiency in the local language(s), and expertise on the region.
- Sufficient time to observe and conduct in-depth interviews is required.

Type of intervention for which this approach is appropriate

- The success of the intervention strongly depends on its ownership and adoption by the communities in the various implementation contexts.

Priority data-collection tools

- In-depth one-on-one or group interviews with the beneficiaries.
- Immersion field observations with the beneficiaries.

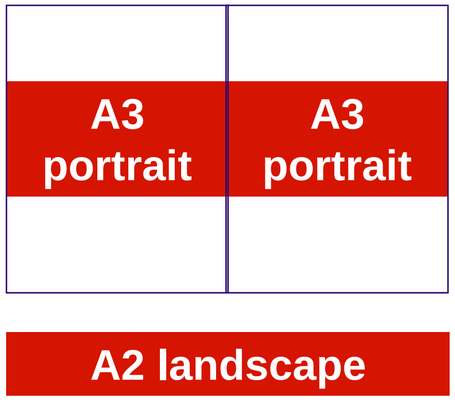
An approach recommended for

- **Continuous-improvement uses:** to understand contexts in depth and to adapt to them.

Annexes

PRINTING THIS MAP OF USES

Note: the final formats of the mappings are in A2 landscape format (2 x A3 portrait format)



TOP LEFT

Defend choices

"Defend and justify our choices before decision-makers or partners and revise them if necessary."

Inform strategy

"Stimulate strategic reflection by management (at operative, executive, or top level)."

Support discussions

"Substantiate internal and external debates on the best policy guidelines or ways to solve development problems."

Strategic uses

Internal uses or uses that target institutional partners, to support sectoral policies and strategies

Management - support uses

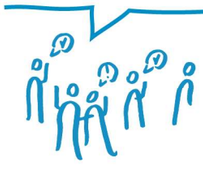
Primarily internal uses, to better monitor and manage ongoing projects and interventions

Monitor over time

"Help in project implementation monitoring, especially by providing the data needed to make informed choices."

Support decision-making

"Support decision-making on appraisal, progress, or renewal of projects."



Reflect with the team

"Facilitate reflection within teams on the purpose and quality of the action, by providing internal feedback."

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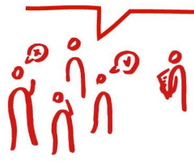
Learn lessons

"Learn lessons and put good practices to work when carrying out interventions."



Better appraise and design

"Provide better insights at the appraisal phase (better ex-ante evaluation of projects) and improve the design of future interventions (wider range of methods, feasibility, etc.)."

Continuous - improvement uses

Primarily internal uses, to improve future projects and interventions

Dialogue - support uses

Mostly external uses, aimed at strengthening or stimulating partnerships in the projects and policies supported

Dialogue with partners

"Facilitate dialogue with partners, in particular by building a relationship of trust."

Strengthen capacities

"Help strengthen the capacity of the stakeholders involved."

The following persons helped develop this map of uses: Thomas Delahais, Agathe Devaux-Spatarakis, François Jégou, Jade Joviado, Camille Laporte, Léa Macias, Fiora Noël, Karen Rousseau, Claire Zanuso.

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Strategic uses

Internal uses or uses that target institutional partners, to support sectoral policies and strategies

Inform strategy

"Stimulate strategic reflection by management (at operative, executive, or top level)."

Defend choices

"Defend and justify our choices before decision-makers or partners, and revise them if necessary."

Support discussions

Contribute to internal and external debates on the best policy guidelines or ways to solve development problems."

CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

- Qualify & characterize how the intervention contributes to systemic issues
- Identify contributions or lack thereof, in case of uncertainty
- Collectively work toward the desired changes and the means to contribute to them

COUNTERFACTUAL EVALUATIONS

- Justify the impact of interventions, especially innovative ones where much is at stake
- Establish impact data collection that is rigorous, systematic, and sustainable

Monitor over time

"Help in project implementation monitoring, especially by providing the data needed to make informed choices."

Support decision-making

"Support decision-making on the appraisal, progress, or renewal of projects."

Reflect with the team

"Facilitate reflection within teams on the purpose and quality of the action, by providing internal feedback."

Management - support uses

Primarily internal uses, to better monitor and manage ongoing projects and interventions

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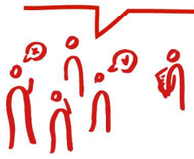
Learn lessons

"Learn lessons and put good practices into work when carrying out interventions."



Continuous - improvement uses

Primarily internal uses, to improve future projects and interventions

QUALITATIVE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

- Delineate the conditions to be met in order to achieve the desired changes
- Better judge the relevance of interventions according to the observed conditions

ETHNOGRAPHIC EVALUATION

- Understand contexts in depth and adapt to them

Better appraise and design

"Provide better insights at the appraisal phase (better ex-ante evaluation of projects) and improve the design of future interventions (wider range of methods, feasibility, etc.)."

REALIST EVALUATION

PROCESS TRACING

- Assess the relevance of interventions according to their ability to trigger certain mechanisms in certain contexts
- Systematically test causal links in a variety of contexts
- Involve local stakeholders in determining the contexts,mecha-nisms, and results

OUTCOME HARVESTING

- Better understand the outcomes that can be obtained from an intervention depending on its context
- Start from changes observed by local stakeholders rather than from the intervention

Strengthen capacities

"Help strengthen the capacity of the stakeholders involved."

Dialogue with partners

"Facilitate dialogue with partners, in particular by building a relationship of trust."

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

- Highlight the changes that matter to people locally and how the intervention contributes to those changes

Dialogue - support uses

Mostly external uses, aimed at strengthening or stimulating partnerships in the projects and policies supported

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What are impact evaluations for?

This map of uses is divided into four quadrants, each one devoted to one of four main types of uses identified during a participatory exercise by AFD evaluation officers and personnel from different AFD departments (thematic divisions, national field offices, etc.). The exercise, which lasted several months, helped show how AFD personnel actually used the evaluations. The uses were in fact sometimes different from those generally highlighted in evaluations (and in impact evaluations in particular).

Strategic uses

Internal uses or uses that target institutional partners, to support sectoral policies and strategies

Continued - improvement uses

Primarily internal uses, to improve future projects and interventions

Management - support uses

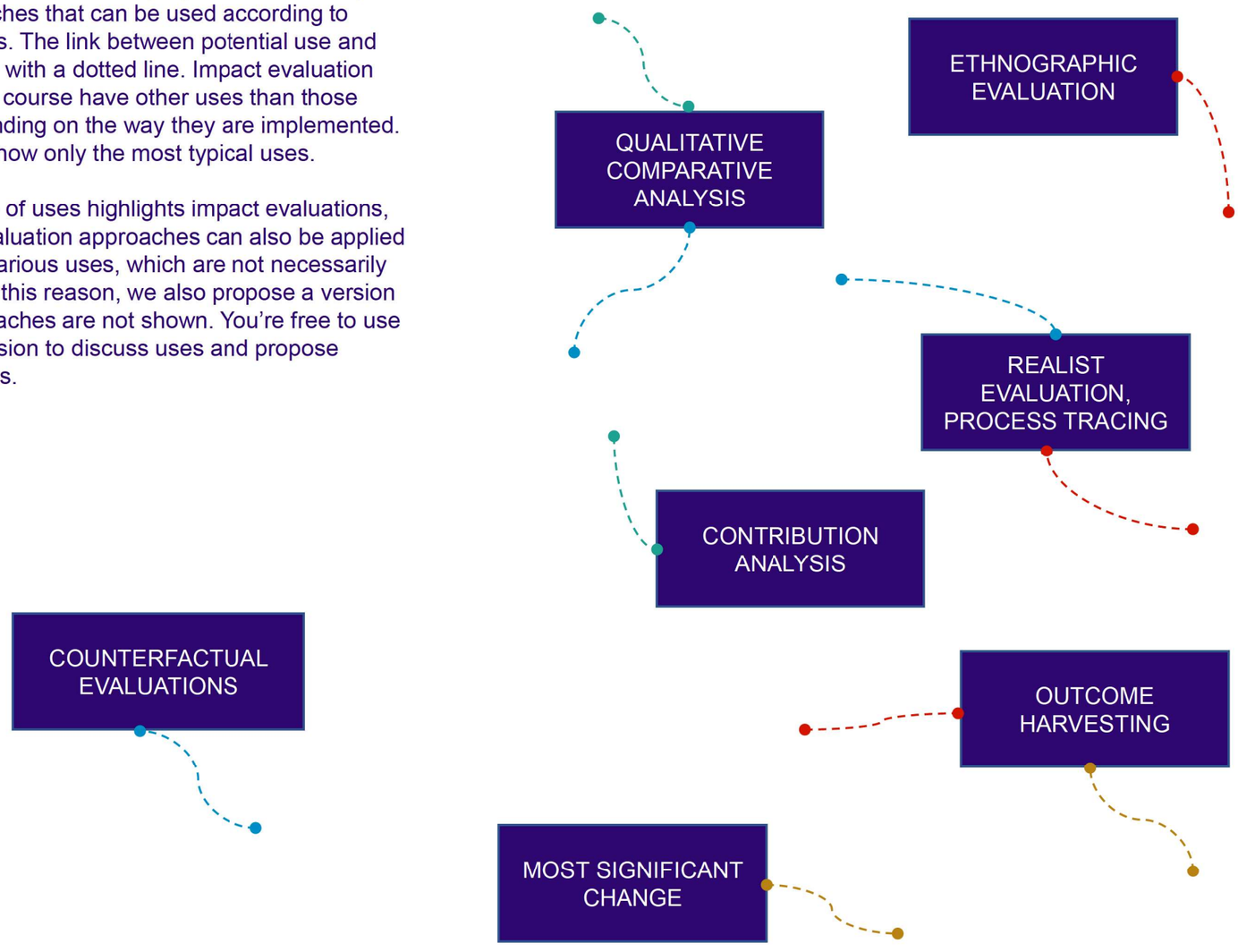
Mainly internal uses, to better monitor and manage ongoing projects and interventions

Dialogue - support uses

Mostly external uses, aimed at strengthening or stimulating partnerships in the projects and policies supported

For each of these uses, we have proposed several impact evaluation approaches that can be used according to contexts and needs. The link between potential use and approach is shown with a dotted line. Impact evaluation approaches can of course have other uses than those shown here, depending on the way they are implemented. We've chosen to show only the most typical uses.

Moreover, the map of uses highlights impact evaluations, but many other evaluation approaches can also be applied to address these various uses, which are not necessarily impact issues. For this reason, we also propose a version in which the approaches are not shown. You're free to use this unmapped version to discuss uses and propose specific approaches.



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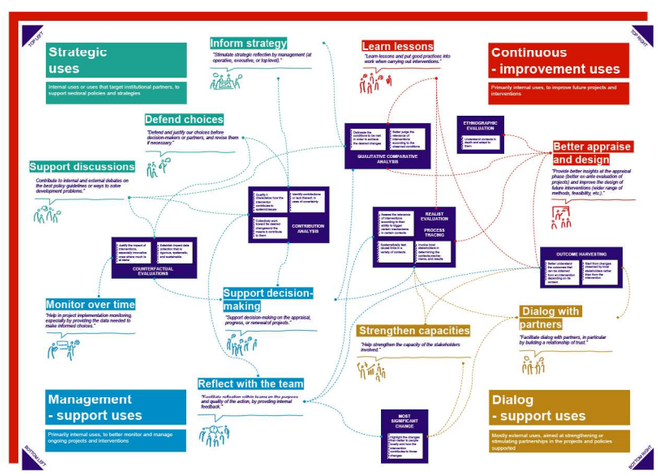
HOW TO USE THIS MAP?

Evaluation does not start out useful; it becomes useful. Those who commission the evaluation, as well as the partners involved, often have only a vague idea at the start of how the evaluation may be useful to them. For this reason, it's often up to the evaluation officers to facilitate this initial work of explaining the potential uses. The map of uses is thus designed as one way of discussing the potential uses of the evaluation with those who commission it.

The unmapped version can help in positioning: What is the purpose of the evaluation? Is it to be used internally or externally? Is it intended for the short term (e.g., to make a funding decision), or rather for the long term, to fuel future strategy planning or learn from one's errors? The types of uses help not only to position the evaluation, but also to understand in more detail the context of why it was commissioned and its role in the institution's divisions and units' plans.

To start with uses means opening up a range of possible evaluation approaches. This is where the second map of uses comes in to play, as it helps us to identify approaches that apply to several uses and then decide on the most suitable choices. It also shows that a single approach cannot apply to all uses.
The map of uses can thus help us in the choices that must be made at this level.

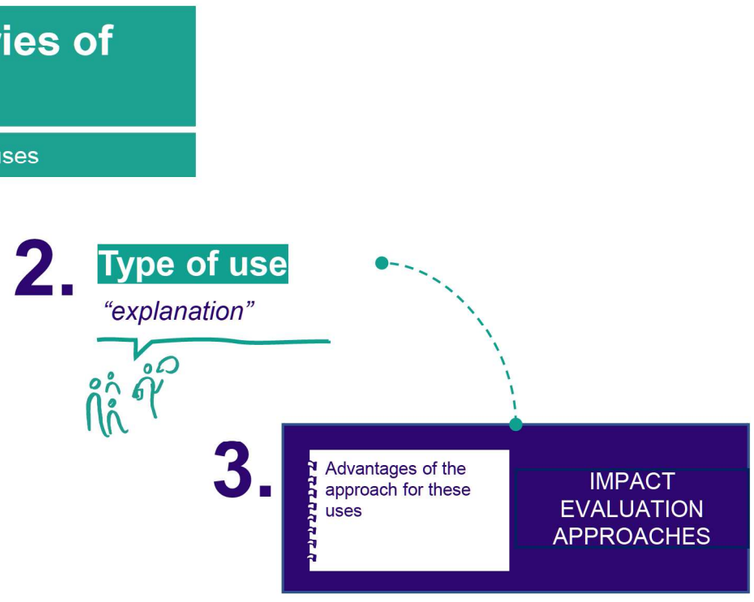


HOW TO READ THIS MAP?

How do I get started with this document?

Position the A3 sheets in front of you using the triangular marks in the corners to form a map of uses.

Depending on the use you are interested in, **read the corresponding approach sheets or cases**.



The following persons helped develop this map of uses: Thomas Delahais, Agathe Devaux-Spatarakis, François Jégou, Jade Joviado, Camille Laporte, Léa Macias, Fiora Noël, Karen Rousseau, Claire Zanuso.

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What kind of impact evaluation is best...

FOR YOUR PROJECT, YOUR NEEDS AND YOUR BUDGET?

The best form of impact evaluation is that which is useful to AFD and its partners. Various types of methodological approaches can be used depending on the contexts and the issues at stake.

At AFD, the purpose of impact evaluations is to document and measure the outcomes of an intervention on the people or ecosystems concerned, whether those outcomes are intentional or not. These impact evaluations seek to analyze the mechanisms that enabled the change or impact that was measured, and the degree to which the intervention contributed to it.

The results of impact evaluations feed into research on official development assistance and can be used to support public decision-making in the countries where AFD operates. At the same time, these evaluations consolidate the use of data and the culture of evaluation, which are essential for good governance.

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SDS strategic design scenarios