IEG
Independent Evaluation Group

WRITING TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN EVALUATION: A HOW-TO GUIDE

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Writing Terms of Reference for an Evaluation: A How-To Guide

The terms of reference (ToR) document defines all aspects of how a consultant or a team will conduct an evaluation. It defines the objectives and the scope of the evaluation, outlines the responsibilities of the consultant or team, and provides a clear description of the resources available to conduct the study. Developing an accurate and well-specified ToR is a critical step in managing a high-quality evaluation. The evaluation ToR document serves as the basis for a contractual arrangement with one or more evaluators and sets the parameters against which the success of the assignment can be measured.

The specific content and format for a ToR will vary to some degree based on organizational requirements, local practices, and the type of assignment. However, a few basic principles and guidelines inform the development of any evaluation ToR. This publication provides user-friendly guidance for writing ToRs by covering the following areas:

1. *Definition and function*. What is a ToR? When is one needed? What are its objectives? This section also highlights how an evaluation ToR is different from other ToRs.

2. *Content*. What should be included in a ToR? What role(s) will each of the sections of the document serve in supporting and facilitating the completion of a high-quality evaluation?

3. *Preparation*. What needs to be in place for a practitioner or team to develop the ToR for an evaluation or review?

4. *Process*. What steps should be taken to develop an effective ToR? Who should be involved for each of these steps?

A quality checklist and some Internet resources are included in this publication to foster good practice in writing ToRs for evaluations and reviews of projects and programs. The publication also provides references and resources for further information.

Definition and Function: What Is a Terms of Reference?

In its singular form, "terms of reference" refers to the document that details an assignment for an individual evaluator or team of evaluators. This same phrase can also be used in the plural (ToRs) to refer to multiple such documents.

A specific ToR spells out an evaluation manager's requirements and expectations related to an evaluation, review, or similar study (see Box 1). The ToR is typically developed during the planning phase for an assignment and is often used to attract and hire an evaluation consultant or team through a competitive process. The document then serves as the basis for a contractual arrangement between the commissioner of an evaluation and the external consultant(s) or in-house staff carrying out the work. In some contexts, a request for proposal acts as a comparable document to a ToR—allowing organizations to post a description of a scope of work and elicit bids from qualified vendors.

Box 1. What Is a ToR?

A ToR presents an overview of the requirements and expectations of the evaluation. It provides an explicit statement of the objectives of the evaluation, roles and responsibilities of the evaluators and the evaluation client, and resources available for the evaluation.

A ToR provides clearly detailed parameters for—

1. Why and for whom the evaluation is being done
2. What it intends to accomplish
3. How it will be accomplished
4. Who will be in involved in the evaluation
5. When milestones will be reached and when the evaluation will be completed
6. What resources are available to conduct the evaluation.

ToRs are needed for a broad range of evaluation-related activities, regardless of the scope of the evaluation, budget, or timeline (Box 2). A ToR can cover an entire evaluation operation or just a subset of tasks. For example, the document might focus on the in-depth analysis prescribed to address one evaluation question. However, a ToR should be as brief and concise as possible. A typical length is 5–10 pages, with administrative annexes supplementing this information where appropriate, depending on the complexity and depth of the evaluation.

Multiple functions are served by the ToR, and identifying these various purposes helps clarify what structure and content are warranted. The basic functions of a ToR are listed below and then explained in detail in the "Content of the Terms of Reference" section.

1. *Sharing background knowledge and providing the rationale for the evaluation*. The project or program being evaluated is described along with key milestones in its history. This allows the ToR to show how the evaluation or review contextualized within the broader development strategy for a sector or country/region. A ToR typically includes a brief review of relevant available knowledge regarding the program and its effects to inform evaluation consultants or teams.

Box 2. When Is a Terms of Reference Needed?

ToRs can guide the work to be completed in all phases of a project or program. A ToR focused on evaluation-related activities is typically developed for the following types of work:

- Needs assessments
- Prefeasibility studies
- Feasibility and design studies
- Comprehensive evaluations, including performance audits and impact evaluations
- Individual evaluation tasks
- Appraisal missions
- Activity or program reviews
- Independent activity completion reports
- Technical advisory groups
- Audits.

ToRs are critical for determining the working arrangement between the commissioner of a study and an external consultant or team. They are also beneficial for in-house arrangements to clarify scope, responsibilities, schedules, and budgets.

2. *Identifying the specific* evaluation questions. The ToR builds an understanding of the scope, process, and expectations for the desired task(s) by succinctly presenting information about why the evaluation is being conducted, its objectives, and its intended users.

3. *Defining the scope, approach, and methodology.* ToRs typically specify the scope of the evaluation (time period, depth, etc.), but vary in terms of how much flexibility consultants or in-house evaluators have to propose their own methodologies or approaches to complete the designated tasks. However, at least the expected broad approach is outlined clearly in the ToR to set realistic expectations among all relevant parties engaged in the study. The degree to which the evaluator(s) can propose additional or alternative methods for completing the task(s) should also be specified.

4. *Articulating the governance and accountability arrangements.* This section highlights the governance and accountability arrangements. The ToR document can be crafted for an individual consultant or for a team. Various stakeholders will be engaged to facilitate or participate in the work, and parallel related tasks conducted by other consultants might be in progress. The ToR outlines the roles and responsibilities envisioned to carry out the assignment and the management and coordination arrangements. The hierarchy for accountability and the structure and resources established for support is also explicitly stated in this section.

5. *Setting the guiding principles or values*. A ToR specifies research ethics or procedures that the evaluator(s) is expected to follow.

6. *Identifying the professional qualifications of the individual evaluator or team.* ToRs present the expected profile of the evaluation team. This includes describing desired experience and credentials, as well as noting the minimum professional requirements or competencies.

7. *Defining the deliverables and schedule*. The ToR specifies the expected deliverables, timeline, and any work plan if available. The ToR may ask the evaluator to provide a detailed timeline

and milestones within the timeline specified. ToRs list any products that the evaluators should develop as part of their assignment. To the degree possible, this list includes details related to format, content, length, intended audience, and the expected review process.

8. *Defining the budget*. The ToR states the budget (and potentially other resources) available for the evaluation and what that budget covers.

Managers commissioning evaluations might find it difficult or impossible at times to specify all these details before an evaluation or review begins, but ToRs are most effective when they can fulfill these functions in setting and communicating expectations up front.

Content of the Terms of Reference

The text of the ToR should provide sufficient background information related to the assignment, and then move in logical order from the evaluation objectives and intended users through to the required qualifications of the consultant or team and the resources available. The level of detail and ordering of specific sections will vary based on the nature and magnitude of the evaluation task but standard topics are typically covered (Box 3).

Box 3. Template for HIV Prevention Evaluation ToR—Sections

A. Why do the evalution?
1. Evaluation topic
2. Background and rationale
3. Evaluation objective
4. Users of the evaluation

B. What are we evaluating?

5. Evaluation questions
6. Target group(s)
7. Prevention interventions
8. Prevention indicators

C. How are we evaluating?

9. Evaluation design
10. Data sources and procedures
11. Data analysis procedures

D. How will the evaluation be managed?

12. Evaluation activities and schedule
13. Evaluation team members and level of effort
14. Administrative and logistical support
15. Budget

ToRs can range from being formally prescriptive in approach or methods to providing enough information to establish realistic expectations: in many cases consultants can lend their expertise to further refine the evaluation scope, methodology, and tasks. A description of the appropriate content for each section is provided below; these topics are sometimes consolidated into fewer sections for relatively simple evaluation tasks. Following this guide to content and organization, the section on process provides tips on how to plan for an evaluation and decide key factors in order to prepare each of these sections of the ToR effectively.

Evaluation ToRs should also take into consideration the difficulties of collecting confidential data and presenting findings that might prove threatening to particular stakeholder groups. Thus, processes for the evaluator or evaluation team to check in and ask about sensitive issues should also be addressed.

Background Information and Rationale

The opening section of the ToR typically provides an orientation about the overall program, project, or activity to be evaluated. Depending on the complexity of this program and the context for this evaluation, this section might be a few paragraphs or a couple of pages. Details should focus on the following as appropriate:

1. *The current purpose, objectives, and intended outcomes* of the program being evaluated, including the key output, outcome, and impact indicators
2. *The rationale for the evaluation and the key overarching evaluation objective and question*, including an overview of what decisions might likely be influenced by the findings
3. *A history of the program*, including how these objectives and targeted outcomes have changed over time
4. *The context in which the program is situated*—including organizational, social, political, regulatory, economic, or other factors that have been directly relevant to the program's implementation
5. *The roles and responsibilities of various key stakeholders* in designing and implementing the program, noting any significant changes that have occurred in these roles over time
6. *Any studies or evaluations that have been conducted on the program* or related activities to date. If available, the monitoring and evaluation framework for the program should be attached.

This section should also provide the purpose of the evaluation, which will then be elaborated on in the remainder of the ToR. Details to support a basic understanding could include—

1. An explanation about who has initiated this study; and
2. Reasons for the timing, including any impending shifts for the program or stakeholders (for example, relevant policy changes, turnover in management, and so forth).

The ToR could refer to existing project document documents for details on background, if the document does not contain the topics noted above.

Specific Objectives of the Evaluation and Evaluation Questions

Once key aspects of the overall context have been established in the background section, the ToR can delve into the specific details of the envisioned assignment. The framing and presentation of the objectives of the evaluation is usually a brief but important section in any ToR. Common understanding of, and consensus around, the stated objectives and evaluation questions will be important throughout the negotiation and implementation of the assigned tasks. Objectives for evaluating development assistance might relate to predetermined criteria, such as program relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, or impact among others.

Although the general rationale has likely been introduced already in the background section, additional information should be provided to specify the following elements:

1. *The specific evaluation question or questions*
2. *Possible uses of the evaluation findings and products by various stakeholders*
3. *The intended users and stakeholders of the evaluation.*

The statement of the specific objectives for the evaluation should adhere to the following guidelines where possible:

1. *Avoid a lengthy list of objectives*. A simple mission or evaluation of an activity might focus on a single objective. In broader studies, the focus should be limited to no more than three to five objectives. It is generally preferable to explore a few issues in depth rather than to examine a broad set superficially. Common objectives are to assess the impact of the evaluation either for summative purposes or to scale up a project; formative to assess the functioning of a specific component. These objectives should be highlighted in the ToR.
2. *Use clear outcome-focused language*. Do not state the objectives in technical or process terms.

Specific evaluation questions should be identified for each objective presented by the ToR. Depending on the nature of the evaluation, these questions could range from being broad to being quite specific:

a. *Broad question*—What has the program achieved vis-à-vis its objectives?
b. *Specific question*—What is the impact of the program on minority girls' enrollment and dropout rates (within the context of the larger program promoting the overall objective of increasing enrollments)?

To the extent possible, the list of questions should be kept to a minimum; this will help ensure that issues that arise could be addressed during the evaluation and will allow for the evaluator to refine the list and specify possible additional questions in exploring the purpose, scope, and methodology.

There should be a logical progression between the purpose of the evaluation, its specific objectives, and the questions posed in relation to each objective. Questions should be specific and focused on the activity being evaluated. Depending on the type and purpose of the evaluation, such questions are likely to address specific demands for information related to the following broad areas of inquiry:

1. *Have the right things been done?* (relevance, effectiveness)
2. *Have things been done well?* (efficiency, effectiveness)
3. *What results have been achieved?* (effectiveness, impact, cost/effectiveness)
4. *How do the results compare with an alternative intervention to achieve the same objective?* (relative effectiveness, impact, cost/effectiveness)
5. *How could things be done better in the future?*
6. *Are the results sustainable?*

In constructing the list of evaluation questions, it is important to prioritize these areas of inquiry according to the information needs of stakeholders and the overall rationale driving the evaluation.

Many organizations establish standard criteria for setting the objectives and scope of evaluations of their projects and programs to support consistent assessment over time. For example, there might be requirements for conducting midterm and final evaluations at specified intervals. Objectives for evaluating development assistance might relate to predetermined criteria such as program relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, or impact, among others.

Scope of the Evaluation

This section presents the parameters of the evaluation in terms of its scope and limits. The scope should be realistic given the time and resources available for implementing the study. Details here could include—

1. *Time period and project components* covered by the evaluation. For example, the evaluation might focus on the effects for participants during a particular segment of the program's history or be limited to a specific geographic area.
2. *Other existing or planned evaluations* of the same subject. In the interest of harmonization, this study could build on or complement relevant activities being conducted by development partners.
3. *Target groups.* The evaluation might focus on a subset of beneficiaries or on the complete range of engaged stakeholders.
4. *Issues that are outside of the scope.* The commissioner of the evaluation might recognize some aspects of the program or local context that will be difficult or impossible to analyze during the prescribed time period. The ToR should clearly specify when such topics are not a focus of the envisioned tasks.

Approach and Methodology

Specifying the approach for the evaluation can be the most challenging part of developing the ToR. This section should outline how the evaluation will be conducted. However, many ToRs leave room for the evaluator(s) to define a more detailed methodology in line with the prescribed scope and objectives. Key elements generally highlighted here include:

1. *The overarching methodological framework* (for example, case study, sample survey, desk review, mixed methods, and so forth)
2. *Expected data collection and analysis methods*, with descriptions of any instruments used to collect needed information
3. *Outcome and output indicators* that are being proposed or have been used to measure performance, along with associated baseline and target data
4. *Availability of other relevant data*, such as existing local, regional, or national data, or data from similar programs
5. *The process for verifying findings* with key stakeholders
6. *Meetings or consultations* or other interactions expected with particular stakeholder groups
7. *How various users/stakeholders in the evaluation are likely to be involved* (for example, steering committee).

The expected approach should be described in enough detail to ensure that the evaluation can serve as contractual monitoring tool (and, if desired, as a learning process) for the commissioning organization but with enough flexibility to draw on the expertise of selected evaluators. For a competitive process, those responding to a ToR can be asked to submit a more detailed proposal for the evaluation plan. This process during the selection phase will allow candidates to differentiate themselves in terms of the quality of their proposed methodologies. The ToR could also ask the evaluator(s) for a detailed methodological approach as the first deliverable of the evaluation.

Governance and Accountability

This section of the ToR on the evaluation approach specifies the governance and management arrangements for carrying out the evaluation plan. Any decision-making arrangements (such as a steering committee or an advisory group) should be described here in terms of their organization and function(s). Participation of other stakeholders (for example, beneficiary representatives in validating the results) and the lines of accountability should also be noted with, at minimum, clear guidance on who will review and approve the evaluation plan and subsequent products of the study.

If specific support or resources are being provided by the commissioning agency, these could be mentioned here as well. The resources would fall under the responsibilities of the managers/ commissioners of the evaluation. Often such support includes cover letters for data collection signed by the commissioner of evaluation and site-visit coordination with program implementation agencies.

Guiding Principles and Values

A ToR specifies research ethics or procedures that the evaluator(s) should follow. These might include fundamental principles of the organization commissioning the task(s), tenets that should guide the study (for example, transparency, cost-effectiveness, collaboration with beneficiaries, hiring of local consultants, involvement of local agencies, etc.) or practices expected of the evaluator (for example, confidentiality of data, anonymity of responses, making data publicly available in a usable format, and so on). The commissioning organization may also wish to include references to evaluation ethical and professional standards outlined by various professional associations, such as the African Evaluation Association, the United Nations, the European Evaluation Association, and so forth. This section could also be subsumed under "Background" or "Scope."

Professional Qualifications

The mix of knowledge, skills, and experience needed will depend on the scope and methodology of the evaluation. The ToR should specify as clearly as possible what the profile of the evaluator or team should be to attract the strongest candidates for conducting the study. Relevant and useful details in this section relate to:

1. *Whether an individual or a team is expected* or whether both possibilities could be considered
2. *What specific expertise, skills, and prior experience* the evaluator

(individual or team) is required or desired to possess—including evaluation (qualitative and/or quantitative methods) skills, technical competence in the sector to be evaluated, process management experience, language proficiency, and in-country or regional experience

3. In the case of a team, *how the different expertise, skills, and experience among team members* will be integrated and complement each other
4. *What the expected distribution of responsibilities* is among the team leader and team members.

Any additional information that will help gauge the qualifications of potential evaluators should also be noted in this section. This might include requests for curriculum vitae, references, or examples of evaluation reports recently completed.

Deliverables and Schedule

The outputs and reporting requirements expected for the evaluation should be specified, along with the required or proposed timeline for the study. Clear guidance in this section will help ensure that the outputs from the evaluation meet expectations. Details should include the following:

1. *Specific information about the types of products* (reports, presentations, and so forth), who will use them, and how they will be used. Ideally, each product will be listed separately to specify its individual requirements and timeline.
2. *The structure and format* for each product. This would include any expectations regarding length and content (for example, the order of sections or the inclusion of an executive summary).
3. *The language(s) in which deliverables should be written.*
4. *Organizational standards and practices*. Any established style guide or standard formats for written documents should be referred to here. In addition, if the commissioning agency has a code of ethics or established principles directly relevant to the evaluation (for example, transparency, confidentiality, and so forth), these should be noted.

5. *The timeframe for products, including milestones*. ToRs often specify when a project is expected to launch, when a detailed evaluation plan or inception report will be expected, and so on. If this is the case, the estimated due dates should be clearly specified for each activity and product. Alternatively, some ToRs provide an overview of the expected scope, objectives, and deliverables and request that evaluators propose a realistic timeframe.
6. *Required meetings/consultations*. This section should also note the frequency and types of meetings expected with the evaluation commissioner and other stakeholders of the evaluation.

Regardless of which deliverables are requested, the description of the requested outputs and prescribed timeline should allow for ample opportunities and time for peer reviews and other feedback from stakeholders to be incorporated into product revisions.

Budget and Payment

The commissioner of an evaluation should consider what funds are available to support the tasks envisioned for the evaluator(s). In cases where a limited budget will likely constrain the scope and methodology of the study, an effective practice is to state the available budget and ask proposers to describe what they can expect to achieve. This allows for value-for-money assessments. Alternatively, if the budget is somewhat flexible, the ToR can ask evaluators to come up with their own estimates based on the tasks they propose.
If a ToR specifies the amount budgeted for an evaluation or review, then it should also clearly stipulate what this figure is intended to include. A typical approach in hiring a team is to specify an overall amount that is expected to cover team member costs (salaries, expenses, and per diem), travel (international and in-country), and any additional payments for translators, data processors, or other expected costs. For ToRs targeting individual consultants, a commissioning organization often sets a budget for that consultant's time and expenses, with the expectation that travel costs will be arranged and covered separately.

Aside from information on the budget itself, this section often includes any pertinent details related to payment. For example, the type of contract (for example, fixed price or time plus materials), the required process for invoicing, or the intervals and means of payment might be specified.

Structure of the Proposal and Submission Guidelines

ToRs can be used to request proposals from potential evaluators as part of a competitive process. If this is the case, the ToR should provide instructions regarding the proposal format, content, and submission process, including details on the following:

1. *Structure*, including the list and order of topics to be covered
2. Any *format* requirements and length
3. Deadline
4. *Mode(s) of transmission* (e.g., post, fax, email)
5. *Number of copies* (if not electronic)
6. *Criteria and timeline for judging proposals*
7. *Opportunities for clarification*, including deadlines for questions and/or the schedule for a bidders' conference.

Additional References or Resources

A high-quality evaluation will draw on existing knowledge regarding relevant previous and ongoing studies and program experiences. To the extent possible, the ToR should identify useful information sources for the evaluator to better ensure that this body of knowledge is drawn on in planning and conducting the evaluation. Easily accessible references might be listed in the text or materials appended in the annexes of the ToR. In addition, notes could be included of in-house reports and other materials that will become available to the evaluator once the selection process is completed.

Preparing for Writing the Terms of Reference

Most organizations have standard rules in place for designing and publicizing consulting opportunities and requesting qualifications or proposals from evaluators. The specific steps for developing the ToR for an evaluation will vary according to this context. Recommended actions that mark common decision points for preparing ToR across all types of organizations fall broadly into two categories: those that should be completed before the writing of the ToR even begins and those that should occur during the writing and review stage. The planning stage comprises the following elements.

1. *Establish the need and purpose for the evaluation*. Before drafting the ToR, the evaluation manager needs to first understand the investment being evaluated, including its social and economic context. This orientation will help the manager to better identify the objective(s) of the evaluation, intended uses and audience, and he evaluability of a project or program.
   If the intent or potential value of the designated exercise is not clear or if there are no data sources to support a reliable impartial evaluation process, then plans for this assignment should be reconsidered before drafting the terms of reference.

   In addition, a critical part of this early planning step will be to broadly consider the type of evaluation needed to effectively achieve the targeted objectives within the desired timeline. The scope, design, and methodology of evaluations span a broad spectrum and have direct implications for the level of effort in terms of the tasks required and the length of engagement (Table 1).

Table 1. Example Uses of Consultants or Teams for Evaluations

General type of evaluation	Summary of typical tasks	Length of engagement
Prospective study	Designing the evaluation Supporting or conducting data collection Continuing engagement throughout project to assess outcomes	Long term—depends on time span of project
Midterm review	Reviewing documents and analyzing existing data Conducting limited data collection	Often completed in days or weeks
Ex post review	Reviewing documents and analyzing existing data	Often completed in days or weeks
Rapid appraisal	Reviewing documents and analyzing existing data Conducting limited data collection	Usually completed within one to two months
Impact evaluation	Conducting intensive data collection, usually at multiple points in time (approach and methods depend on type of study) Analyzing data to inform study improvements and identify findings	Could take one to five years, unless an ex-post or rapid assessment approach is used to shorten the time required for a project that has already been implemented

2. *Identify and engage stakeholders.* Parties with a vested interest in the evaluation and contracting process should be engaged throughout the process of developing the ToR; therefore, it is important to identify relevant stakeholders and their roles early on. The list of stakeholders and their points of entry into the process will vary based on the organization and the nature of the study, but likely categories for inclusion are the following:

a. The lead evaluation advisor or unit in the contracting organization
b. Technical staff engaged with the project or program in focus
c. Specialized staff responsible for contracting, procurement, or accounting arrangements
d. Partners for the project or program
e. Any advisory council or steering committee established for either the project or the evaluation itself.

Once these stakeholders and their roles have been determined, they can be engaged at the appropriate points in the ToR development process for contributions to content and quality assurance.
It may be the case that the unit that commissions the evaluation is independent of the administrative unit under which the program is implemented. In this case, the independent unit may retain the right to the final shape and content of the ToR. Nonetheless, in order to commission a fair, valid, and useful evaluation, it is good practice to confer with the administrative unit early on.

3. *Estimate resources available or needed for the evaluation*. The process and flexibility for establishing a budget will depend on an organization's or partnership's resources and practices. Understanding the opportunities and constraints provided by the available budget will be important for thinking through the scope and timeline of the evaluation and identifying who should be involved. Evaluation contracts range from short-term assignments for individual consultants costing under $10,000, to much more complicated large scale and/or long-term studies implemented by teams for $900,000 or more.

   The ToR does not necessarily identify the specific budget for consultants, but this area still needs to be explored and clarified as part of the decision-making process.

4. *Determine whether an internal or external evaluation consultant or team is needed.* Both internal and external evaluations are legitimate and each approach has advantages. Developers of the ToR should decide whether the evaluation scope of work is best suited for an individual or a team and whether the study will be conducted internally, externally, or by a mixed team. Common configurations for leading or contributing to an evaluation include—

   a. An individual consultant
   b. A consulting team, situated at a firm or in an academic environment, either in-country or external
   c. A team comprised of individual consultants, managed by the commissioner of the evaluation.

   The ideal scenario for who should conduct the evaluation will vary according to organizational capacity, budget, the purpose of the evaluation, and the demands of stakeholders. However, certain considerations help inform this decision:

   a. A smaller budget might be required if the evaluation can be conducted by in-house staff, assuming that available staff time and expertise is sufficient for the tasks.
   b. Evaluations conducted solely by in-house staff could be seen as less objective by funders and other stakeholders, especially if these staff have a vested interest in the program being evaluated.
   c. Hiring an outside consultant (individual or team) allows the commissioner of the evaluation to carefully select the best mix of expertise and experience for the assignment.

   A team is preferred in cases where—

   a. An intensive level of effort is needed under a tight timeline.
   b. A diverse mix of qualifications is needed for various aspects of the study – such as survey design, statistical data analysis, interview skills, focus groups, and so forth.
   c. Any risks for delaying study components due to unforeseen circumstances need to be mitigated.

Selecting individual consultants to form the needed team allows the agency managing the evaluation to establish the best mix of qualifications and experience, but it also requires more coordination and management from the commissioning agency. Typically, when individual consultants are used, the commissioning unit takes on the role of putting the various inputs from the individual consultants together to produce a final product.

Using a predetermined team through a firm could better ensure that the consultants will collaborate effectively and integrate their efforts. However, there will also be a cost (overhead, profits) imposed by this firm for management of the team.

Process of Writing and Implementing the ToR

Once the preparatory phase is over, and the decision is to proceed with the evaluation, the following steps help ensure that ToR can help achieve the intended outcomes of the evaluation.

1. Draft the ToR. The manager or hiring team should establish agreement with all partners regarding who will prepare sections of the draft ToR. This draft should be checked, reviewed, and revised according to the agreed upon process to assure quality and conform with organizational requirements.

2. Consult with stakeholders. All parties involved in commissioning the evaluation should have ownership of the contents of the ToR, so the consultative process established for reviewing and finalizing this document is very important. The manager or team overseeing the ToR development should be strategic on consulting key stakeholders—such as line ministries, project units, and so forth—to hear their opinions and recommendations and reflect these in the document where possible.

3. Adhere to the organization's contracting and procurement procedures. Any ToR should be consistent with internal requirements for contracting, as specified in standard organizational guidelines or clarified by a contract specialist. In addition, most organizations specify steps that must be followed in the procurement process. The ToR cannot be finalized until those commissioning the evaluation have ensured that it is aligned with internal standards and practices.

4. Offer consultants the opportunity to discuss and clarify the ToR. The work agreement and contract arrangements should be based on two-way communications between the commissioner of the evaluation and potential contractors, where possible, to clarify expectations for all parties. For a competitive process, this communication mechanism often takes two forms:
   a. Potential bidders are offered the opportunity to submit specific questions regarding the ToR (or request for proposals) up until an established deadline. Once the deadline has passed, the issuer of the ToR circulates answers for all the submitted questions to all known bidders. In some cases, based on recurring questions or

concerns expressed by interested consultants, the ToR is reconsidered and revised.

b. A bidders' conference is held in which interested consultants can meet with the manager or team commissioning the evaluation to ask questions and further discuss the envisioned work program.

In cases where the ToR is developed for a noncompetitive process (for example, sole source or in house), it is still advisable to provide an opportunity for discussion to clarify the expectations of all involved parties. This clarification is further achieved by having the evaluator or consultant team develop a detailed work plan to accompany the ToR early on during the contract period.

The appropriate text needed for a specific ToR becomes clearer through the process of exploring, planning, and implementing these steps.

Overall, ToRs should be written in plain language. The content should be concise and not overly prescriptive. This clear presentation of expectations will allow potential evaluators to respond thoughtfully and demonstrate their expertise in shaping the study design and plans for implementation.

Resources

Various development agencies, government departments, and consulting firms have tools and models for developing effective ToRs or requests for proposals. A checklist for a ToR and some Internet resources and publications that can be referred to for developing effective ToRs are noted here.

Checklist

The following checklist provides a basis for reviewing the quality of the ToR. It may be used by the drafters of an evaluation ToR to ensure that all necessary elements are contained within the ToR document. This checklist is drawn from the United Nations Evaluation Group Standards for Evaluation in the UN (2005), with modifications.

1.	**The purpose of the evaluation is clear and realistic.**
☐	Is there explicit mention of who requires the evaluation results and what they will do with them?
2.	**The subject of the evaluation is elaborated.**
☐	Are the conceptual linkages between the strategy and the intended outcomes(s) clearly explained?
☐	In the case of a thematic or cluster evaluation, are the specific projects to be considered clearly mentioned, including their timelines, executing agencies, and budgets?
☐	Is there a clear description of the external political, economic, and social context within which the program(s) and/or project(s) are situated?
☐	Is there a description of the intervention's contribution to the overall strategic plan?
3	**The scope of the evaluation is clear and consistent in relation to the purpose and the questions.**
☐	Is the scope of the evaluation, including time period, phases in implementation, geographical area, parameters with respect to the subject and stakeholders being examined, made explicit?
4	**The evaluation questions address the contribution to development and organizational effectiveness.**
☐	Do the questions address the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the programs or projects being evaluated, as well as the sustainability of results?

☐	Do the questions address the value added by the programs and projects in comparison with alternatives?
☐	Do the questions address a partnership strategy with national actors and its relation to effectiveness in achieving the outcome?
☐	Do the questions address strategic positioning and its comparative advantage?
☐	Do the questions require the evaluation to provide disaggregated information by gender, ethnicity, and other relevant criteria?
5	**The evaluation questions should include an assessment of the extent to which program design, implementation, and monitoring have taken the following cross-cutting issues into consideration (if required):**
☐	Human rights
☐	Capacity development
☐	Institutional strengthening
☐	Changes in discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes
☐	Innovation or added value to national development
6	**The ToR should reflect the findings of an assessment of evaluability (if required).**
7	**The evaluation is manageable within time requirements and budget allocation.**
8	**The product(s) of the evaluation respond to information demands identified in the statement of purpose.**
☐	Does the ToR clearly describe the deliverables or product(s) and the audience(s) of such product(s) in terms of format, structure, and length?
☐	Do they define which audience(s) requires what products?
☐	Is there a proposed structured for the final report that meets the organization's requirements for evaluation reports?
9	**The composition, skills, and experience required are commensurate to the task.**
☐	Does the ToR outline the requisite skills, experience, qualifications, and other relevant competencies for the tasks outlined?

☐	Is there a requirement for the independence of the evaluators, meaning that they have not been involved in the design, implementation, or monitoring of the programs or projects to be evaluated?
10	**The legal and ethical bases for conducting the evaluation are outlined.**
☐	Is the ToR accompanied by the code of conduct for carrying out the evaluations?

Web Site Resources

European Commission EVALSED: The Resource for Social and Economic Development: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evalsed/index_en.htm

NZAID Tools: http://nzaidtools.nzaid.govt.nz/developing-terms-reference-reviews-evaluations

OECD Development Assistance Committee Network on Development Evaluation http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/55/0/44798177.pdf

United States Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement: http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/guide/index.htm

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Toolkit: http://ww2.wkkf.org/default.aspx?tabid=75&CID=281&NID=61&LanguageID=0

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