

**Evidence Act Toolkit**

**Annual Evaluation Plan Workbook**

**DATE**

**AGENCY OR DEPARTMENT NAME**

**Authored by: Office or Team Name**

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# Activity 1

Use this activity to complete [**Table 1**](#_Worksheet_#1:_Identifying) on the following page. If you decided to form a core team to assist with developing and updating the agency’s Annual Evaluation Plan, identifying team members will be a key priority. Beyond a core team, however, it is important to consider the range of other stakeholders who might play a role.

*Time needed:* 1-2 hours

*Materials needed:* White board or flip chart paper, sticky notes, markers

**Part I: Identifying Stakeholders**

1. Convene an in-person meeting of evaluation office staff and/or other relevant team members in a setting with either a white board or flipchart paper.
2. [**Table 1**](#_Worksheet_#1:_Identifying) offers suggestions for groups of people who might have an interest in the development of the Annual Evaluation Plan or skillsets and perspectives to contribute to the process. If your team believes a particular group could be a potential stakeholder, mark “Y” in the third column. Add groups or titles for others not listed in the table.
3. When possible, write down the names of specific people. At the start, you might not have specific people in mind for every group; program leadership and staff, for example, might only become involved if they will be supporting an evaluation on the Annual Evaluation Plan in a given year or using the findings to inform programming. As you progress through the evaluation planning process, you might add specific names to groups identified during the initial mapping phase.
4. For groups or people designated as stakeholders, consider what their interests might be related to the Annual Evaluation Plan. Note any particular expectations or concerns related to the process that your team identifies. If you are not able to answer this for a certain group, you might want to interview one or more people from that group. This step is especially valuable when considering individuals for a core team.
5. Next, note the contributions you think this group or specific people could offer to the process.

**Part II: Conducting Stakeholder Interviews**

1. Develop a list of stakeholders to interview, with a particular focus on those who might be central to the development of the plan.
2. Develop a set of questions you would like to ask, ensuring that questions are open-ended and cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Consider starting with broad questions and asking follow-up questions for more details. Some sample questions include:
   * Tell me about your role. (Let them explain what they do and who or what they’re responsible for).
   * What role, if any, do you play in accountability or program improvement?
   * What are your expectations, needs, or frustrations related to evaluation at the agency?
   * What are your expectations for the Annual Evaluation Plan? What are your concerns?
   * What evaluation skills or perspectives might you be able to contribute to the process of developing an Annual Evaluation Plan?
3. Schedule interviews with the selected stakeholders. The length of time will depend on how many interview questions you generate. It might be useful to have two team members conduct the interview: one who will ask questions, and one who will take notes.
4. During the interview, introduce yourself and explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to inform the development of the agency’s Annual Evaluation Plan. If necessary, provide background information about the Annual Evaluation Plan and the overall development process.
5. Use the information you gather to complete the “Interests” and “Contributions” columns in [**Table 1**](#_Worksheet_#1:_Identifying). Documenting this information will be helpful for deciding roles and determining how to engage stakeholders, which is addressed in [**Activity 2**](#_Activity_2:_Stakeholder).

## Table 1: Relevant Stakeholders

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Stakeholder Group | Possible Stakeholders | Potential Group? | Name(s) | Interests | Contributions |
| Program Staff | Program Staff |  |  |  |  |
| Program Leadership |  |  |  |  |
| Data/Performance Measurement Staff |  |  |  |  |
| *Fill in role* |  |  |  |  |
| *Fill in role* |  |  |  |  |
| Agency Leadership | Secretary or Under/Assistant Secretary |  |  |  |  |
| Director(s) |  |  |  |  |
| Chief Data Officer |  |  |  |  |
| Statistical Official |  |  |  |  |
| Budget Staff |  |  |  |  |
| *Fill in role* |  |  |  |  |
| *Fill in role* |  |  |  |  |
| *Fill in role* |  |  |  |  |
| Grantees |  |  |  |  |  |
| Program Beneficiaries | Participants or Customers |  |  |  |  |
| Program Evaluators | Evaluators |  |  |  |  |
| Policy Groups | Local Policymakers |  |  |  |  |
| State Policymakers |  |  |  |  |
| Federal Policymakers |  |  |  |  |
| Advocacy Organizations |  |  |  |  |
| Other Government Agencies |  |  |  |  |
| Academic or Other Researchers |  |  |  |  |
| *Fill in role* |  |  |  |  |
| *Fill in role* |  |  |  |  |
| Other | Staff from Similar Programs |  |  |  |  |
| Professional Associations |  |  |  |  |
| *Fill in role* |  |  |  |  |
| *Fill in role* |  |  |  |  |

# Activity 2

Use this activity to complete [**Table 2**](#_Table_2:_Determining) on the following page.

*Time needed:* 30-60 minutes per interview

*Materials needed:* White board/flip chart, sticky notes, markers, responses from [**Table 1**](#_Worksheet_#1:_Identifying)

1. Prior to the meeting, write the names of stakeholders on sticky notes. If specific names are not noted, write generic titles or general groups (e.g., director of program being evaluated; program staff impacted by an evaluation; academic experts who could inform the evaluation).
2. On the white board or flipchart, create vertical dividers for three stakeholder groups – internal, external (governmental), and external (nongovernmental) – and four horizontal dividers – Responsible, Accountable, Consult, and Inform (RACI).
   * **Responsible:** Make decisions on “significant” evaluations to be included on the Annual Evaluation Plan
   * **Accountable:** Provide content for the Annual Evaluation Plan (consider stakeholders who were involved with the development of the learning agenda)
   * **Consult:** Offer suggestions related to evaluation plans, provide background on the current state of evidence, or explain challenges and mitigation strategies
   * **Inform:** Receive updates on Annual Evaluation Plan development and implementation
3. Gather your evaluation team and provide context on the activity – to inform a stakeholder engagement plan, which will help you determine how and when to engage your stakeholders. Describe the RACI definitions.
4. Provide each attendee with the completed worksheet from [**Activity 1**](#_Activity_1:_Stakeholder), which might now contain detailed information gathered from stakeholder interviews.
5. Give attendees 10 minutes to think about the relevant stakeholders. They should draw or describe the stakeholder on a sticky note (one stakeholder per sticky note).
6. Add the stakeholders to the appropriate section of the white board or flipchart.
7. Once all stakeholders have been added, facilitate a discussion on each RACI category and strategies for engagement. Add or remove sticky notes as needed.
8. Fill out [**Table 2**](#_Table_2:_Determining)with the stakeholders and engagement strategies agreed upon by the team.

## Table 2: Stakeholder Roles

**Internal Stakeholders**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name & Title / Group | RACI Category | When to Engage | How to Engage |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**External Stakeholders (Governmental)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name & Title / Group | RACI Category | When to Engage | How to Engage |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**External Stakeholders (Nongovernmental)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name & Title / Group | RACI Category | When to Engage | How to Engage |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

# Activity 3

Should you decide to facilitate a conversation with stakeholders to generate a definition of “significant”, see the meeting agenda below for one possible collaborative approach. Meeting attendees would likely be the core team you identified. In some agencies, the Evaluation Officer (EO) might decide to take a first pass at developing criteria.

Regardless of how your agency develops an initial set of criteria for determining the definition of “significant”, you should consider soliciting broader feedback across agency prior to finalizing the definition. The process for gathering feedback could be as simple as sending an email and asking for reactions to the criteria, or a more involved strategy such as conducting focus groups with program leaders or other staff.

*Time needed:* 2 hours

*Materials needed:* White board; Post-It notes

**Meeting Purpose: Crafting a Definition of “Significant” for the Annual Evaluation Plan**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Agenda Item** | **Time** | **Details** |
| Meeting Goals | 5 minutes | Specify the purpose of the meeting and review the agenda. |
| Introductions | 10 minutes | Each attendee should introduce themselves (name and title) and answer the question, “What is your perspective when it comes to agency evaluation?” |
| Overview of Annual Evaluation Plans | 15 minutes | Discuss the purpose, process, key milestones, and timeline. Review the process developing a definition for “significant” evaluations. |
| Individual Brainstorm | 20 minutes | Individually, each attendee should brainstorm key factors that come to mind when considering the importance of an evaluation to the agency. Write each distinct factor on a Post-It. When finished, attendees should place their Post-It notes on the white board or wall. |
| Group Categorizing | 20 minutes | Invite attendees up to the white board to collectively begin to group Post-Its into themes. The facilitator can assist, but should allow attendees to work through the process of grouping. Discussion is encouraged. |
| Large Group Discussion | 30 minutes | Facilitator leads a large group discussion about the key themes, including: what are critical themes that **must** be part of the agency’s criteria? If any groups contain minimal Post-Its, can they be eliminated? |
| Conclude | 20 minutes | Decide on a list with the appropriate number of criteria for your agency. Discuss next steps and conclude. |

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# Worksheet #1

Once your agency has developed a list of criteria for “significant” evaluations, it might be useful to develop a rubric to ensure an objective assessment of each evaluation.

Using the table below, write your criteria for “significant” evaluations. The table is pre-populated with illustrative criteria, but you should use your agency’s agreed-upon criteria. Using this list of criteria, add a checkmark where each evaluation meets a criterion. Alternatively, you could develop a number scale to indicate the degree to which the evaluation fits the criteria.

## Table 3: “Significant” Evaluations

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria for “Significant” | Evaluation #1 | Evaluation #2 | Evaluation #3 |
| Builds on prior agency research |  |  |  |
| Fills a knowledge gap critical to program or agency operation |  |  |  |
| Congressionally mandated evaluation |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
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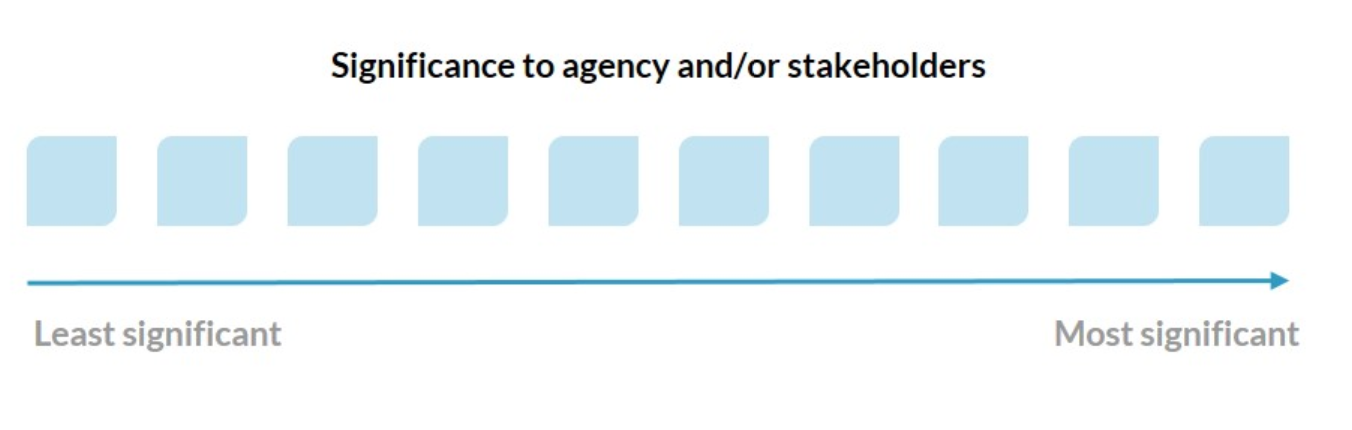
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# Activity 4

Once you have developed your criteria for “significant” evaluations, the next step is facilitating a conversation to determine which evaluations meet the criteria. Below is one approach an agency could consider to identify “significant” evaluations.

**Possible Approach**:

* Review all evaluations to filter out any that are very unlikely to be deemed significant. This will make the ranking process more manageable if an agency has a large number of evaluations.
* Divide the remaining evaluations into equal groups and have each member of the Annual Evaluation Plan core team score the evaluations assigned to them against each criterion on the agency’s rubric (see [**Worksheet #1**](#_Worksheet_#3:_Using)). If core team members need more information, encourage them to contact internal or external stakeholders about the proposed evaluations and their importance. This information will help team members understand which evaluations meet the agency’s criteria for “significant.”
* Once each evaluation is rated, facilitate a conversation with the core team in which each member shares highly-rated evaluations from their reviews and makes recommendations for the Annual Evaluation Plan.
* Consider ranking the evaluation proposals using Post-Its, as they can be re-arranged based on your discussions (*image below)*. There is no target number of “significant” evaluations, and [OMB M-19-23](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/M-19-23.pdf) advises against creating a “laundry list of evaluation activities.”



In contrast to the quantitative ranking approach described above, you could take a more informal, qualitative approach by simply discussing the degree to which the evaluations align with agency criteria for “significant” evaluations. The process your agency uses will depend in part on its capacity and staff time for formally scoring evaluations, as well as the number of evaluations.

# Worksheet #2

Use this worksheet to outline with whom you will share findings from “significant” evaluations and how you will share them.

## Table 4: Dissemination Approaches

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Stakeholder or Audience** | **What do you want to communicate?** | **How will you communicate?** | |
| **Format(s)** | **Channel(s)** |
|  | * Specifics about upcoming evaluation activities |  |  |
| * Progress report on evaluation activities |  |  |
| * Interim report of findings |  |  |
| * Final report of findings |  |  |
|  | * Specifics about upcoming evaluation activities |  |  |
| * Progress report on evaluation activities |  |  |
| * Interim report of findings |  |  |
| * Final report of findings |  |  |
|  | * Specifics about upcoming evaluation activities |  |  |
| * Progress report on evaluation activities |  |  |
| * Interim report of findings |  |  |
| * Final report of findings |  |  |
|  | * Specifics about upcoming evaluation activities |  |  |
| * Progress report on evaluation activities |  |  |
| * Interim report of findings |  |  |
| * Final report of findings |  |  |

Source: Torres, R., Preskill, H., Piontek, M., Evaluation Strategies for Communicating and Reporting: Enhancing learning in organizations (1996)

# Worksheet #3

Use this worksheet to document the required components for all “significant” evaluations. Add more rows as needed to accommodate all of your agency’s “significant” evaluations. In addition to helping you write descriptions of “significant” evaluations for the Annual Evaluation Plan, documenting this information can help your agency identify additional planning steps that might increase feasibility.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Evaluation #1: | |
| Evaluation Questions |  |
| Data/Information Needed |  |
| Methods |  |
| Challenges |  |
| Dissemination Strategies |  |
| Evaluation #2: | |
| Evaluation Questions |  |
| Data/Information Needed |  |
| Methods |  |
| Challenges |  |
| Dissemination Strategies |  |
| Evaluation #3: | |
| Evaluation Questions |  |
| Data/Information Needed |  |
| Methods |  |
| Challenges |  |
| Dissemination Strategies |  |

## Table 5: Evaluation Descriptions