Module 5

Defining Evaluation Questions

Module Objectives

By the end of this module you will be able to:

1. • Identify the 3 types of evaluation questions.

2. • Identify what makes a good evaluation question.

3. • Know difference between typical performance evaluation and impact evaluation questions.

4. • Break questions down into sub-questions.

5. • Use the design matrix as an organizing tool.

6. • Identify additional sources to tap for questions.

7. • Use a results framework to develop questions.

8. • Identify and apply criteria for prioritizing questions.

ADS References for this Module

ADS Reference	Topic or Issue
ADS 201.3.1.6 and 201.3.15	PE's focus on descriptive and normative questions and others related to operational decision-making.
ADS 203.3.1	Careful selection of evaluation questions to test fundamental assumptions underlying project design; thematic questions.
ADS 203.3.1	Identify questions during program design.
ADS 203.3.1	Link questions to required decisions.
ADS 203.3.16	Consultation with in-country partners and beneficiaries is essential to ensure question relevance.
ADS 203 3.1.4	Stakeholders consulted to assist in prioritizing questions.
ADS 203 3.1.4	Identify a small number of key questions and specific issues answerable with empirical evidence.
ADS 203 3.1.5	Evaluation reports to address all questions in SOW.
ADS 203 3.1.5	Statement of Work to include evaluation questions.

Types of Questions

1. <u>Descriptive</u> questions ➡ Represent "what is"

2. <u>Normative</u> questions ➡ Comparisons of "what is" to "what should be"

3. <u>Cause and Effect</u> questions ➡ Identify if results have been achieved due to the intervention

1. Descriptive Questions

Represent "what is"

- Like a snapshot

- Seek to describe or understand a program or process, or attitudes towards it

- Are usually straightforward questions (who? what? where? when? how? how much/how many?)

- Often used to seek opinions from project participants or beneficiaries

- Typically, Performance Evaluations contain descriptive questions

Examples – Descriptive Questions

- ❖ What do stakeholder groups see as the goals of the program?

- ❖ What are the primary activities of the program?

- ❖ Where has the program been implemented?

- ❖ Who received what services?

A Special Point-

Questions about the *extent of gains or changes* over a period of time– whether concerning crop production, traffic flows, trade patterns, test scores, attitudes or behaviors- are *descriptive* questions

2. Normative (Comparative) Questions

Is what is what should be?

- Often use monitoring data

- Measuring against *previously established* criteria (or norms)

- Often are questions about outputs or outcomes

- Did the project meet the targets on specified indicators?

- Did the project conform to general standards?

Examples – Normative Questions

- ❖ Did the project spend as much as was budgeted?

- ❖ To what extent was the budget spent efficiently?

- ❖ To what extent was the target of vaccinating 80% of the nation's children met?

- ❖ To what extent was the program gender equitable?

Where to Find the Standards/Norms

- Program design documents

- Monitoring systems-indicators with targets

- Documented standards from USAID or other agencies

- Accreditation systems, blue-ribbon panels, professional organizations

Should the evaluation team set them?
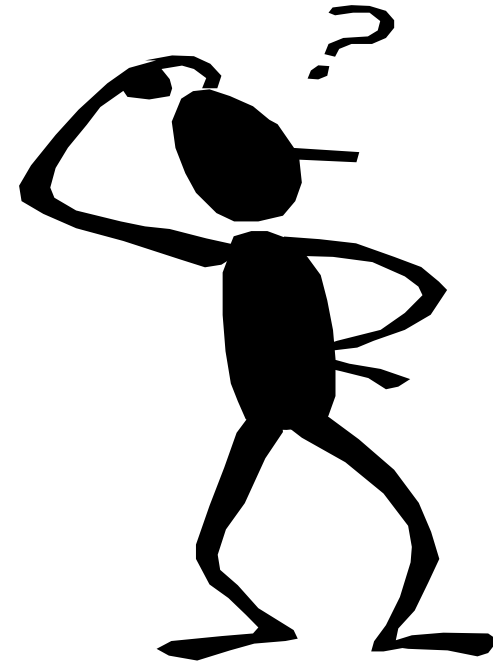
3. Cause and Effect Questions

Identify if results have been achieved due to the intervention

- Seek to determine what difference *the intervention* made

- Eliminate all other possible explanations

- Ask if the desired results have been achieved AND whether it is the intervention that has caused results

- Suggest before & after and with & without comparisons

- *Impact Evaluations* focus on cause and effect questions

Examples – Cause and Effect Questions

❖ Did the three-country partnership strategy preserve the biodiversity of the affected area while sustaining livelihoods?

❖ As a result of the job training program, do participants have higher paying jobs than they otherwise would have?

❖ Did the increased tax on gasoline improve air quality?

What do you think?

Can Performance Evaluations address cause and effect questions?

Exercise 5-1

What type of question is it?

If unclear, rewrite to clarify

Good Questions

- Are listed in priority order

- Link clearly to the evaluation purpose

- Are realistic in number and kind given the time and resources available

- Can be answered definitively

- Reflect stakeholder needs and interests; including those of women and minority groups

- Consider the timing relative to the program or policy cycle-reflect the requirement for utility

- Are not two (or more) questions in one

- Are extent, how, what questions rather than yes/no questions (unless normative)

Sub-questions are Often Needed

How relevant was the intervention?

- To what extent did the project fit within USAID's country health strategy?
- To what extent was the intervention aligned with the host country government's priorities?
- Was the timing appropriate given the political context?

What were the characteristics of those served?

- What were the most prevalent age groups?
- To what extent was gender equity achieved?
- What were participants' most frequent health issues?
- Did we target the youth most considered 'at risk'?

The Design Matrix

C-8: Evaluation Design Matrix

Evaluation Purpose:					Page 1 A
General Design:					
Question	**Sub-questions**	**Type of sub-question**	**Measure or Indicator**	**Target or Standard (if normative)**	**Baseline Data?**

The Design Matrix

General Design:				Page 1 B
Data Source	**Sample or Census**	**Data Collection Instrument**	**Data Analysis**	**Comments**

Some Sources of Evaluation Questions

What are some sources for evaluation questions?

OECD/DAC Principles: Evaluation Questions

OECD/DAC Principles: **R-4**

- ***Relevance***

- ***Effectiveness***

- ***Efficiency***

- ***Sustainability***

- ***Impact*** *(See note in handout)*

Logical Frameworks Generate Questions

Narrative Summary	Objectively Verifiable Indicator	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Increased standard of living in the eastern province	% of targeted population with higher standard of living 3 yrs after program completion	Sample survey	Economic and weather conditions remain stable
Literacy at the 6th grade level is improved	% of population with literacy rates at or above the 6th grade level	Annual standardized literacy test	Parents, teachers, and students believe literacy is important
Capacity for schools to teach reading and writing is improved	# of people trained % of participants successfully completing the 2-week course	Sign-in sheets; course evaluations	Skills learned are applied in school settings
Recruit skilled instructors; train teachers; provide teaching materials	# training sessions offered % teachers recruited with necessary skill sets	Competency assessments; program records	A pool of qualified instructors exists in-country

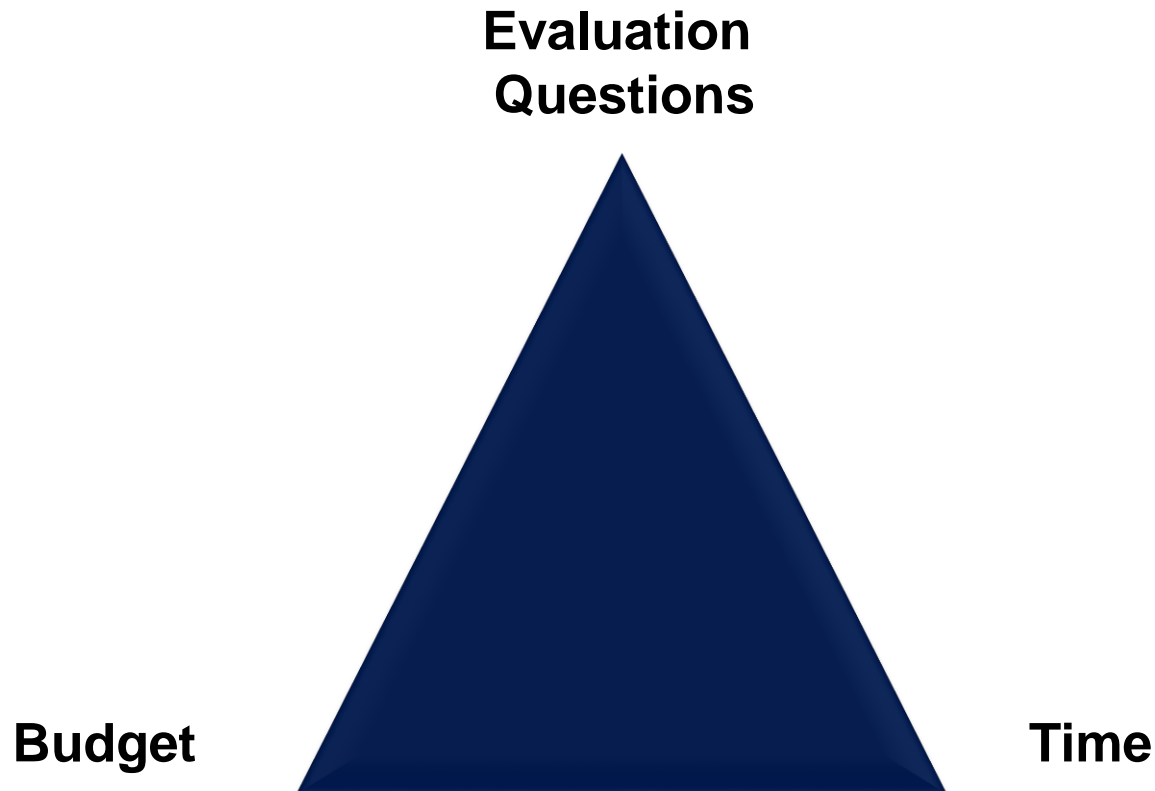# Identifying and Selecting Questions

Two phases:

- *Divergent Phase*: develop a comprehensive list of questions

- *Convergent Phase*: narrow down the list

Balance

A sound balance between evaluation questions and the time and resources available to answer them is essential.

Evaluation Questions

Budget

Time

Some Criteria for Prioritizing

Does this fit the stated purpose of the evaluation?

Will this accommodate key stakeholders?

Who would use the information for what decision?

Would the information possibly change the course of events?

Does the question focus on a critical or major issue, or is the question merely of passing interest?

Is it feasible to adequately answer the question, given time and budget constraints?

Would the evaluation be compromised if this question was dropped? Is it critical to the study's credibility?

Others?

Matrix for Scoring and Ranking

Question # _____   1   2   3   4   5

1. Of interest to key stakeholders?

2. Answerable?

3. Likely to yield information linked to a decision?

4. Critical to the study's credibility?

5. Likely to impact the course of events?

Which Would You Prefer?

Evaluation SOW 1

- Ethiopia

Evaluation SOW 2

- Kosovo (KCBS)

A Final Point

Defining evaluation questions should be a collaborative and iterative process that serves to promote later use of evaluation findings!

Review Questions

- What are the three types of evaluation questions?

- Which evaluation questions are typically found in performance evaluations? Impact evaluations?

- What are some good sources for evaluation questions?

Case Work

1. Using your project documents as a base, develop 3 major questions your group wants to ask in your evaluation, ensuring they are consistent with your evaluation purpose;

2. Identify the type of question (D, N, or C&E);

3. Identify a few subquestions as appropriate for each question;

4. Be ready to present your group work