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| **TOOL SUMMARY: PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA RECOMMENDATIONS** | |
| Purpose | This tool assists the project team or the proposal team in determining which projects should be evaluated, under which circumstances, and who should conduct the evaluation (internal, external, intra-organizational) |
| Information Sources | 1. LWR’s IPD New Directions 2. LWR’s Sector Strategy Memos 3. M&E Proposal Checklist 4. ARC-CRS Preparing for an Evaluation (P. 10) 5. ARC-CRS Managing an Evaluation (P. 12) 6. Donor M&E Requirements |
| Who | Evaluations should be planned into the project during the proposal, therefore this document should be used by the M&E Lead during the proposal development to assist in determining if an evaluation should be conducted and if so, what type. |
| When | During the project proposal. |
| Recommendations | * As is stated in Guideline #2, all projects should have some kind of evaluative process. If an external evaluation is not needed, the project team should nonetheless determine the exact evaluative process that will take place during the project and plan accordingly for the tasks it will require during the M&E Planning processes. |
| Tips | * Any evaluative process should seek to include as many of the project stakeholders as possible, in particular the project participants. Planning for the evaluative process should take into consideration LWR’s Criteria for Evaluation Participation outlined in Section 2. |

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| 1. GENERAL GUIDELINES |

1. LWR evaluations can be done INTERNALLY (by the LWR staff/project teams), INTRA-ORGANIZATIONALLY (by project staff from other countries or regions), or EXTERNALLY (by an evaluation consultant). Regardless of who evaluates the project, all evaluations (or evaluative processes) should follow the same standards for objectivity and rigor of methodologies.

* Internal: *Is when partner or LWR staff conduct the evaluation using a pre-planned methodology*. The advantages of an internal evaluation include that the person will know the organization and the project, will understand organizational behavior and attitudes, will know the constraints of the project, and will cost less. However the disadvantages include that his/her objectivity may be questioned, it may be difficult to avoid bias, he/she may not be dedicated solely to the evaluation.
* External: *Is when someone unrelated and external to the project is hired to conduct the evaluation.* The advantages of an external evaluation include more objectivity, no organizational bias, fresh perspectives, trained in evaluation, and can bring status to the evaluation. The disadvantages include that he/she may not know the organization, may not know of constraints affecting recommendations, may miss out on important insights, could be expensive, and requires a lot of staff time to manage the consultants and evaluation process.
* Intra-organizational*: Is when LWR project staff from a country or region outside of that which the project was implemented conducts the evaluation.* This method still gives an internal perspective as he/she will be aware of LWR’s projects and operations, but will not be directly linked to that project. This will help with objectivity and will allow him/her to have more insights about the project that will be useful to LWR. The disadvantage of this method is that many LWR staff may not have time to dedicate to conducting an evaluation, it is more costly than an internal evaluation, and requires significant advanced planning.

* For more details on internal vs. external evaluations see (*Box 1. Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Insiders Versus Outsiders in Planning, Monitoring, Review, or Evaluation* in ARC-CRS Preparing for an Evaluation P. 10) and (*Table 4: Tradeoffs between Internal and External Evaluators* in ARC-CRS Managing an Evaluation P. 12)

1. **All projects should include some kind of evaluation process**, whether formal or informal, internal, external or intra-organizational.
   * Most projects benefit from an evaluation process at the end of the project. Mid-term evaluations are helpful for projects of 3 or more years, though there might be specific circumstances where mid-term evaluations are relevant for shorter projects, or not relevant no matter how long the project.
2. **Projects that are implemented with RESTRICTED funding must follow the donor’s requirements and/or guidelines**. Identify these requirements and guidelines during the development of project proposal (*Initial M&E Plan)* and take them into consideration when completing the Detailed M&E Plan*.* This will ensure that monitoring, reporting, and data collection contribute to meeting the donor evaluation requirements.
   * + If the donor does not require an evaluation, then follow the LWR recommendations outlined below.
       - Make sure to document the selected evaluation method with justification, confirm it with the donor, and file a signed donor understanding in the project files.
       - If the donor requirements are not clear, consult the LWR M&E Unit for advice during the proposal phase.
3. During the planning/design stage for UNRESTRICTED projects, and based on each region’s specific processes, the partner, LWR country staff, and/or regional M&E manager should make recommendations for which evaluative process they suggest for each project. The following criteria can be used as reference when determining if the project should be evaluated internally, externally, or intra-organizationally.

**INTERNAL EVALUATIONS:**

* The default evaluation for projects should be internal evaluations, unless there is specific justification for an external or intra-organizational evaluation.
* Remember, internal evaluations can utilize everything from participatory reflections with stakeholders to formal and rigorous evaluation methodologies. Being internal should not assume that a less rigorous method will be used.
  + The methodology of the evaluation needs to clearly articulate the internal nature of the process so those who read and/or use the results understand the strengths and shortcomings (such as evaluator bias) of the evaluation.
  + Further guidance and tools on conducting internal evaluations will be provided in Phase II of the DMEL Framework and will be available in late 2013.

**EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS:**

* Are used when required by donors.
* Can be used for new or innovative project that seeks to test and document new methodologies or approaches and lessons learned.
* Can be used for projects designed to leverage LWR funding for larger restricted awards.
* Can be used for projects identified as having the potential to strengthen the evidence of success of LWR’s programming in its priority sectors.
* Can be used to evaluate projects that are part of initiatives across regions (ex. coffee or coco initiatives)
* Can be used for projects that partners identify as being strategic for their mission.
  + The purpose and use for an external evaluation should be clearly articulated using the Evaluation Use Plan

**INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL EVALUATIONS:**

* Can be used to encourage cross regional sharing and learning.
  + It should take advantage of country program staff (outside of the country where the project is implemented) that have expertise in a sector or field related to the project that will be evaluated.

1. Periodic project review (annual reviews) can be conducted, but these should be internal exercises that build upon the analysis completed in Project Progress Reports.

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| 2. LWR’S CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION PARTICIPATION |

*Determining the level of participation will largely impact the methodological design of the evaluation.*

LWR places significant emphasis on working through partners. The reasons for this are various ranging from the value LWR places in the dignity of all people, the value placed on partnerships because of the way they transform us and partners; the greater sustainability that comes from deep investment by participants; the innovation that comes from working with local partners who understand how to best influence the local context and the efficiency of working through others. In general, for LWR, partnership is a matter of best practice.

There are also good reasons to conduct evaluations that are participatory, particularly during the annual and/or mid-term evaluation. Participation by project participants generates more ownership for the project effort on the part of participants which translates into greater sustainability and greater overall dignity because participants are learning and making realizations from their evaluation experience.

Some variations of participation are highlighted in the chart below.

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| **Continuum of Participation** | |
| **Some variations:** | Ask people for their views, perhaps through interviews or discussion groups |
| Involve beneficiaries in the design of the evaluation, for example ask them to help define key questions and criteria for evaluation |
| Involve beneficiaries in the design, and also in carrying out parts of the evaluation, for instance doing interviews |
| Hand over responsibility for the evaluation to the beneficiaries |

The degree of participation will vary depending on:

* whether it is a mid-term, annual or final evaluation
* the evaluation questions (Some participants won’t be able to answer some questions.)
* the project evaluation objectives (The project designer may place a larger emphasis on learning than accountability and vice versa).