Designing an ex-post evaluation for use

12 tips for practitioners

"Evaluations should be an essential part of the life cycle of a programme. They are intended to increase knowledge of what works and what does not and in which context in order for decision makers and other stakeholders to make timely decisions to support the implementation of programmes and to draw conclusions for policy making." (SWD(2021)198 p.13)

Design for use

- You can never be sure a evaluation will be used, but you can design for use

- Use is more likely if:
    - Stakeholders (or potential users) know about the evaluation process and see it can feed their own thoughts and actions
    - The content is suitable to their concerns, i.e. the evaluation discusses the right topics, asks the right questions, provides insightful answers
    - The evaluation is credible enough, which means the right approach and methods, but also that stakeholders trust the process

Many uses of ex post evaluations

- Contribute to future Structural funds programmes and policies (and other policies)
- Make a judgement (Did we do good? Did it make a difference?)
- Understand problems better, and if solutions can address them
- Know what works and what does not, why, to what extent
- Learn how to implement programmes better in the future
- Dialogue with stakeholders
- Learn about strenghts and limitations of approaches and methods
- Strengthen capacity, create buy-in for evaluation
- … And more!
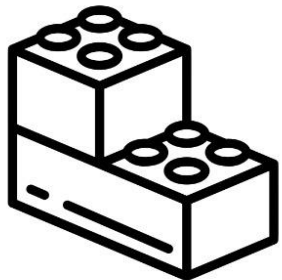
Evaluation Design Building Blocks
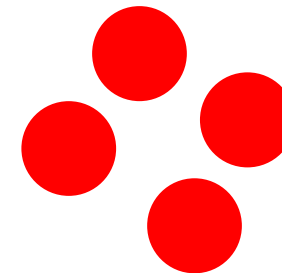
1 Build on Evaluation plan

2 Map uses and users

3 Prioritise

4 Ask meaningful questions

5 Elaborate a Theory of Change

6 Secure data

7 Choose approach and methods

**8** Involve stakeholders

Tip #1: Embrace context

- Many barriers and <u>opportunities</u> in context. Evaluation cannot be done in isolation.
- Factors to consider:
  - Practice / culture of evaluation in organisation? Culture of collaboration?
  - Level of organisational slack?
  - Internal & External stakeholders practices, expertises, skills
- Evaluation as lever to change practices and culture?

Tip #2: Create buy-in for evaluation
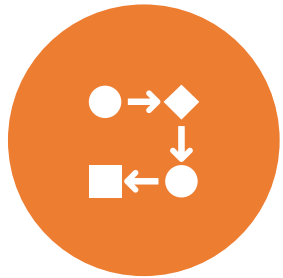
Present the evaluation process as an opportunity. What do you want to know?
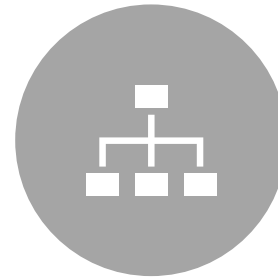
Learn about the policy-making processes in your organisation and look at where the evaluation could fit.

Do not start the evaluation without having an idea of what could be useful to whom. You can still find more users during the evaluation process – including outside MA

Buy-in (or at least interest) is a necessary condition for further use.

Tip #3: Build on the available knowledge

01
Do not start from scratch!

02
Use previous evaluations, previous studies. Call on your colleagues in others MAs.

03
Use the evaluation as an opportunity to learn. Locating and summarising existing information, identifying information gaps are useful inputs as such.

Tip #4: Give the unit of analysis a second thought

What should be the scale and scope of the evaluation?

"Unit of analysis" is the perimeter of interventions / measures / projects that it makes sense to investigate

What would be sensible? Proportionate? Practical?

Prioritise effects on businesses?

Focus on Thematic Objective X

Or Contribution to Adaptation to / Mitigation of Climate change?

Tip #5: Consider joint evaluations

- Increase potential for use with coordinated or joint evaluations dealing with the same issues or questions across different MAs.

- Coordination is an opportunity for dialogue and henceforth learning.

- Joint evaluations are a chance to have access to more methodological designs, and more robust statements.

Tip #6: Ask less questions

The evaluation is unlikely to answer well many questions. Focus on what is really needed.
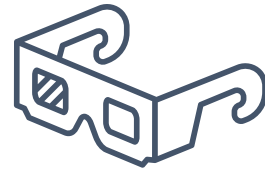
Find the right angle. Use criteria to do so.

Make sure the evaluation can make robust statements in answer to the questions.

Tip #7: Start structuring work early

Do not let the service provider do all the structuring work!

Do an initial portfolio review, even if brief; develop a (basic) ToC; take a look at methodological options.

Use this work to write the ToR & choose consultant

Tip #8: Secure data in advance

- Verify that programme data is available, i.e. can be readily processed in evaluation

- External data sets on beneficiaries can make the difference. Arrange access well in advance

- Experiment use of Big data for modelling/predicting?

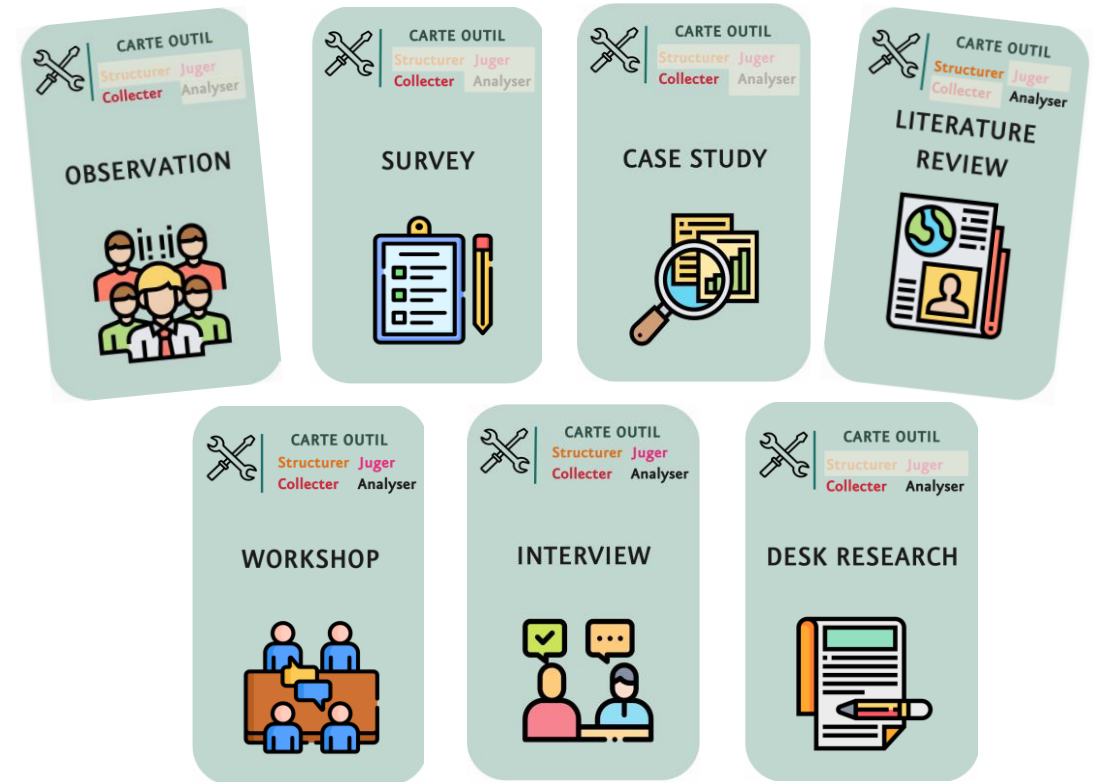## TOP 10 data to carry out an ex-post evaluation& Recommendations to go forward in the case of Kochi

1. Demand and supply characteristics: at a high-resolution zoning/ metropolitan level, multimodal traffic model to make analysis at different scales (metro corridor, global accessibility analysis)

> ➤ *Case of Kochi: need of getting traffic model from UMTC*

2. Census Data: socio-demographic characteristics and job-student trip information at a higher resolution than generally available online with a zoning covering all metropolitan level + employment, economic data and amenities details (statistics data on urban occupation)

> ➤ *Case of Kochi: need of getting details on socio-demographic characteristics and job-student trip information from Census organization*

3. Ridership: number of passengers and passenger.km per line/stations, hourly distribution, period distribution (day type, holydays, special event…), ticket and card use information, user profile (gender, student…)

> ➤ *Case of Kochi : need of getting gender details and general data on user profile (Kochi Card…) from KMRL*

4. Household survey: trips demand, population needs/expecting with social consideration (gender, inclusion, affordability)

> ➤ *Case of Kochi : need of getting the database of the household survey made as part of the Comprehensive Master Plan, in 2016*

5. Real state price : price evolution at different scales (project area and city level)

Tip #9: Ensure triangulation of information

To be credible, the evaluation will need to rely on different sources of information, different perspectives, and different methods.

To know more about the "why?", "thick descriptions" of the changes and effects you want to observe are expected.

If this sounds complicated, ask an evaluation expert to do a preliminary study identifying relevant designs.

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DESK RESEARCH

Tip #10: Get some help

- Preliminary studies are often cheap (5-10 days?)

- Ask an expert to review the arrangements in the evaluation plan or the available data, to draft a ToC or identify the array of available designs. Ask a service provider to clean data at a much lower daily rate than evaluators.

- Make sure they cannot bid for the upcoming evaluation to ensure objectivity and independence.

Tip #11: Invest in inception phase

- Design does not end with the Terms of Reference. Be ready to fine-tune the questions, ToC, approach at the inception stage.

- Practical arrangements matter and will be set at this step too. Ask your service provider to discuss the pros and cons of different scenarios.

- The longer the evaluation, the more you need to provision time and workdays for this phase.

Tip #12: Think on the longer term

- An evaluation may not be instrumental in upcoming decisions, but still be useful on the longer term

- Possible uses:
  - providing structured knowledge on the beneficiaries or end beneficiaries that will be useful in future evaluations,
  - "trial run" for future evaluations (is approach X relevant to our needs?).

- Document the evaluation process to keep a memory of what was done and learnt.

Concluding remarks

- Plan for use – Be prepared to adapt
- Practical matters count, especially to build trust. Ingredients of trust include:
  - Approach and methods
  - Transparency and dialogue
  - An evaluator who talks your language
- Take the time to learn and experiment. Introduce new ingredients progressively. Learn from your evaluation.