

EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS
IMPROVEMENT IN HUMAN
SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

By
Leslie Gevers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART 1: Fundamentals of Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Section 1: Introduction	1
About This Handbook.....	1
Why This Handbook?	1
What is Evaluation	1
<i>Why We Don't Evaluate</i>	3
Continuous Improvement	3
Section 2: Key Concepts	5
Best Practice	5
Standards or Practice Principles.....	6
Minimum Good Practice Standards	6
<i>An Example of Unintended Consequences</i>	7
Quality	7
<i>Figure 2.1: Factors Influencing Quality</i>	8
Stakeholders	9
Client Focus.....	9
Who Are Clients?	10
Performance Information	10
Action Research	10
Qualitative and Quantitative Evaluation.....	11
Outputs and Outcomes	12
Monitoring.....	12
<i>Example of Outputs and Outcomes for Different Services</i>	13
Section 3: Continuous Improvement	15
Understanding Continuous Improvement.....	15
Continuous Improvement is Proactive.....	16
<i>Figure 3.1: Reactive and Proactive Management</i>	16
Continuous Improvement is Flexible.....	17
<i>An Example of Flexible Thinking</i>	17
<i>Figure 3.2: Continuous Improvement is Flexible</i>	18
The Continuous Improvement Process.....	18
<i>Figure 3.3: The Continuous Improvement Process</i>	19
Collecting Information	19
Assessing the Information	20
Planning for Action	21
Taking Action.....	22
Implementing Continuous Improvement	23
Let Management Lead.....	23
Work in Partnership With the Manager or Coordinator ...	24
Define Quality	25

	Involvement Staff	25
	<i>Establish a Quality Committee</i>	26
	Involvement Clients.....	26
	Involvement Other Key Stakeholders	27
	Document Policy and Procedures	28
	<i>Paper</i>	28
	<i>An Example of Policy and Procedures</i>	30
	Develop a Culture of Continuous Improvement	30
	Develop an Improvement and Monitoring Plan	32
	<i>An Example of an Improvement and Monitoring Plan</i>	34
	Audit and Reviews	35
	<i>Checklist: Implementing a Continuous Improvement</i> <i>Approach to Service Management</i>	36
	<i>An Example of Continuous Improvement Action</i>	38
Section 4:	Evaluation	39
	An Evaluation Framework.....	42
	<i>Figure 4.1: Evaluation Framework</i>	42
	Clarify the Focus of the Evaluation	43
	Stakeholders.....	44
	Performance Information	44
	Effectiveness.....	45
	<i>Identifying Outcome Measures</i>	46
	Access	47
	Appropriateness	48
	Efficiency.....	49
	Accountability	50
	Quality	50
	<i>An Example of Evaluation Tools</i>	52

PART 2: Tools for Continuous Improvement

Section 5:	Audits and Surveys	53
	The Importance of Sampling	53
	Audits	53
	<i>An Example of an Audit</i>	54
	Areas of Audits.....	54
	Surveys	55
	<i>Beware of Over-Auditing/Over-Surveying</i>	55
Section 6:	Client Feedback	57
	Anecdotal Information	57
	<i>Areas for Feedback</i>	58
	Complaints/Suggestions.....	58
	Questionnaires/Feedback Sheets.....	59

Client Interviews	59
Critical Reference Group	59
Group Feedback	60

Attachments: Examples of Client Feedback Forms

<i>Resident Feedback Sheet</i>	63
<i>Children’s Satisfaction Survey</i>	65
<i>Client Feedback Sheet</i>	67
<i>Tell Us What You Think!</i>	69
<i>Complaints Record Form</i>	71
<i>Daily Contact Sheet</i>	73

Section 7: Staff Feedback	75
Staff Assessments of Client Progress	75
Case Audits.....	76
<i>Case Management</i>	76
Reflective Practice.....	78
Supervision	79
Case Work Discussions.....	79
Staff Development.....	79
Staff Meetings	80
Improvement Committees.....	80
<i>Checklist: Setting Up an Improvement Committee</i>	81

Attachments: Examples of Staff Feedback Forms

<i>Staff Assessment of Client Outcomes</i>	85
<i>Worker’s Assessment of Client Outcomes Summary Form</i>	87
<i>Client Exit Form</i>	89

Section 8: Group Feedback	91
Facilitator	92
Brainstorming.....	92
Rules for Brainstorming	93
<i>Facilitator Tips for Brainstorming</i>	93
Staff Meetings	94

Attachments: Examples of Feedback Sheets for Group Sessions

<i>Feedback Sheet for Group Sessions</i>	97
<i>Feedback Sheet for a Training Course</i>	99

Section 9: Questionnaires	101
Response Rate	101
Questionnaire Design	102
Likert Scales	104
Feedback Sheets	104

Attachments: Example Questionnaire to Assess the Management of an Organisation

Management Committee Assessment Form 107
Client Survey: Evaluation of Assessment Process 111

Section 10: Other Tools 113
Demographic Data 113
Library/Literature Searches 113
 The Internet 114
 Journal Articles 114
Input From Other Agencies 115
Standards 115
Unit Costs 115
Staff Reports 116
 Example of a Monthly Performance Report 117
Cause and Effect Diagram 118
 Figure 10.1: Cause and Effect for a MOW Service 118
 Figure 10.2: Example Using the 4 P's 119

Attachments: Examples of Forms

Community Groups Questionnaire 123
Checklist for the Implementation of the Practice Standards For Services Working With Children Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence 125

Section 11: Assessing Information 129
Aggregating Data 129
 Coding 130
Presenting Data 130
 Charts/Graphs 130
 Cross Tabulations 131
 Young People's Level of Satisfaction by Age 131
Interpreting Your Data 131
Target Setting 132
 Staff Sickness 132
 Client Satisfaction 132
Trend Analysis 133
Reporting Your Findings 134
 An Evaluation Report 134
 Example Audit Report 135

Section 12: Implementing Change	137
Deciding Changes	137
<i>Look Outside the Box</i>	138
Implementing Change	138
<i>Don't Forget Clients</i>	140
Section 13: A Case Study	141
<i>NewStart Women's Refuge: Except From</i> <i>Improvement and Monitoring Plan for 2000-2001</i>	146
More on Audits.....	149
More on Evaluation.....	149
BIBLIOGRAPHY	153

PART 1:

**Fundamentals of
Evaluation and Continuous
Improvement**

SECTION 1.

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook provides a practical guide and tools for evaluating service delivery in human services within a framework of continuous improvement.

Whilst the focus of the handbook is on service providers in the non-government sector, the materials are also applicable to other service providers in the human services industry.

WHY THIS HANDBOOK?

Increasingly since the mid 1980s the human services have been defined as an industry, and the language of the commercial business sector has been applied to the not-for-profit and human services sector.

Non-government service providers have had to consider their services in terms of:

- cost effectiveness
- customer satisfaction
- quality
- contracts
- performance management
- best practice.

The comparison with the commercial business sector is not always helpful for the not-for-profit sector. However, the focus on consumer satisfaction, quality services and good practice has been embraced by both non-government service providers and funding bodies.

This book provides tools to assist services to look at ways of working that reflect this focus.

WHAT IS EVALUATION?

Evaluation is a process we use to check if what we are doing is achieving the results we want.

Evaluation doesn't have to be a complicated and expensive process. Most workers do some kind of evaluation in an informal, ongoing way without being aware of it.

Service providers generally review their work with individual clients as they go along, and service management monitors the operations of the service on an ongoing basis, however, these reviews are often informal, the results not recorded and changes not implemented. Effective evaluation is best achieved with a formal approach.

Approaches to Evaluation

Evaluations are conducted in many different ways, and for many different reasons. For example:

- a funding body may evaluate a service to decide whether or not to continue funding;
- a social worker may arrange a case conference to evaluate services to a client and to decide on a case plan;
- a case worker and client may sit down together and discuss the client's achievements and responses to services provided;
- a group facilitator may run a feedback session at the end of each session to gather feedback from participants about the session, and suggestions for future session;
- an external consultant may be asked to review the management of a service and make recommendations on how it can be improved;
- a service may want to clarify the target group for its services to make sure they are getting to the people most in need, or to the people the service had decided to target;
- a service may want to identify gaps in service delivery;
- a service or funding provider may want to know if a particular strategy or project has been successful and to identify the factors which contribute to its success or lack of success;
- a service may monitor all of its operations on an ongoing basis to continually improve the services it provides.

In all, evaluation is about stepping back and checking that we as a service provider, a practitioner or a government funding program are doing things well. It is about obtaining concrete information on what we want to achieve, what we are achieving and how effectively and efficiently we are achieving it. Evaluation provides us with the information to improve what we are doing.



WHY WE DON'T EVALUATE

Only a minority of services in the not-for-profit human services sector evaluate and monitor their services in an ongoing and comprehensive way.

Often staff and management see evaluation as another demand on their already scarce resources. They see the results of evaluation being used by government to further tighten the purse strings or to demand even more outputs for their money.

For other services, evaluation is something they don't have a clear handle on and don't have a clear picture of what they can do. They see it as time consuming and difficult to implement. Hence, it is not given a focus or priority.

In reality, however, all services evaluate; but often in an informal and ad-hoc way. This handbook presents information and tools to assist services to understand and implement a formal approach to evaluation and in so doing embark on a journey of continual improvement that leads to better services for clients and more motivated and committed management and staff.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

In many organisations evaluation occurs on an ad-hoc basis such as evaluating a particular program or collecting client feedback to check that clients are happy with the service. In this manual we encourage services to take a comprehensive approach to evaluation which focusses on continually improving the operations and services of an organisation.

Evaluation and continuous improvement go hand-in-hand. We evaluate to improve our services. We evaluate on an **ongoing** basis to **continually** improve our services.

Hence, continuous improvement is an approach to service management which emphasises an ongoing or continual process of evaluation and improvement. This process involves:

- collecting information;
- assessing the information;
- planning;
- taking action; and
- monitoring the changes.

In a nutshell, continuous improvement involves continually monitoring all aspects of a service's operations (including the evaluation and continuous improvement strategies) and taking action as a result of the information gathered from the monitoring.

Continuous improvement is rooted in the culture of an organisation. It is an integral part of the organisation and is reflected in a commitment from the management and staff of an organisation to be involved in continually improving all aspects of the organisation's operations. In this way a commitment to continuous improvement brings to a service a flexibility and vibrancy which lifts the morale of all players and delivers improved outcomes.

Continuous improvement is discussed in more detail in Section 3: Continuous Improvement.