

C. Evaluation Strategy

Your strategy should be a general method of operation with certain generalized objectives and style of operation.

1. Be sure you understand what donor personnel who are responsible for managing the project want and need from the evaluation. Don't rely too heavily on the Scope of Work. Take the manager's needs seriously and be sure they are attended.
2. Develop some concept of implementation team's management needs that the evaluation may be able to help satisfy.
3. Search for positive aspects of project. It is just as productive to build on strength as it is to correct weakness.
4. Identify the negative aspects.
5. Place the positive and negative into a larger perspective that is useful or functional.

In general this strategy aims to gain rapport with both the project and the donor by (a) seeing their points of view and (b) seeking the positive. Empathy and positive attitude help gain rapport, which in turn helps to deal with problems in an objective manner. An evaluation holds something of a personal or individual threat, even though the evaluation team itself has no such intention. Your strategy needs to reduce that threat so that problems can be addressed separate from persons. You can deal with problems coldly and logically--once you have dealt with persons warmly and psychologically.

6. Recommendations need to be considered carefully. In some cases, donors review and modify your recommendations. In others the donor will take your recommendations almost without question, placing the responsibility completely on you. If your report is to be taken seriously, the recommendations must be significant, must be realistic, must address the factors most limiting success of the project, and must be compatible with the notions of those charged with managing the project. Being compatible does not mean agreement or whitewash. It means care in casting the recommendation so that it fits management style and project concepts of those responsible for the project.

Resist the temptation to make too many recommendations. Don't make a recommendation out of a "good idea" if it takes too many resources, too much time, and has little chance of being put into effect.

If you have suggestions, use a heading such as "alternatives to consider." Many "recommendations" would be better described as "alternatives" and do need further study before being adopted. Recall that the project manager and donor live with a project you are seeing only for a matter of weeks. Recognize the limitations imposed on you by the limitations of time.