Reporting structure

Before you start creating your report, it is important to think about who your audience is. In the section below you will find a report template for a standard written evaluation report, but the way you report your findings could take other forms depending on who it is for.

For example, a shorter report with a less formal structure and more eye-catching design, or a presentation using audio and video, could help you to engage different audiences with your work. After all, many people will not have time to read a detailed 50-page document.

It is usually wise to create a few different outputs, based around a full report, to help engage different readers. Certainly a full report is necessary in order to publish your evaluation on the Financial Capability Evidence Hub.

The template below includes all the sections you would need to meet the inclusion criteria for the Evidence Hub – such as programme description and methodology – but you need not stick to the structure suggested below. For example, moving the methods section to the end of the report can be helpful if you have a very detailed methodology, as it means that readers can get to the findings more quickly and consult the methodology later if they wish to. Similarly, if you have lots of charts detailing analyses of quantitative data, it may be simpler to put them in the Appendices and summarise them in the Findings section.

Whatever your report style, careful use of images and good design can break up the text and engage the reader more effectively.

Title

Try to create a short, snappy – but meaningful – title for your report.

Executive summary

This should pull together the key pieces of information from the other sections in the report, briefly describing the programme and main findings. This section is very important as it may be the only part that some people read.

Introduction

Give some background to the evaluation and why it has been conducted. You may want to talk about previous research that has been done in the subject matter of your programme and show how your work fits in with it. This should lead nicely into a detailed description of your programme.

Description of the programme

Make sure people know exactly what the programme is, how it is funded, how long it lasts, where it takes place, and who is involved. Describe the context in which the programme was delivered, including any cultural, political or social factors that may have influenced its outcomes.

Methods

Provide a full description of the methods used, and where, when and who carried out the evaluation. Describe the participants in the evaluation: how many people did it involve and what methods did it use? How were samples chosen and how as data analysed?

Findings

Try to get your results across as simply as possible. Include the findings for each of the outcomes you measured and remember that it is really helpful for people to hear about things that didn't work so well along with those that did. If you collected quantitative data (such as scores on pre- and post- programme questionnaires) it is important to show how many people responded for each piece of analysis you describe. Include figures if they make it easier to understand your data, but make sure you describe what the figures show.

Remember to include summarised background information on the people who took part in your programme, such as age, gender and socio-economic status. The information you include will depend on the specifics of your programme.

Discussion

Go in to some more detail about what the findings you have just described mean for your programme and the people who took part in it. It is also important to acknowledge any uncertainties and/or limitations, and to discuss what they mean for your findings, or for future study.

Conclusions and recommendations

What are the main points you took from the evaluation? What have you learned? Is there anything you will change in the future or anything you would recommend to others? Be careful to evidence any conclusions you draw or recommendations you make.

References

Make sure you include full references for any other pieces of research or data sources you have mentioned or used in your report. There are lots of online resources to help with correct referencing.

Appendices

Include any information that readers may find useful but that would otherwise break up the flow of your report here. This may include things like data tables, questionnaires or interview guides.