

Questions to look for when reviewing an ISB evaluation

This is a short list of issues and questions to provide a framework for looking at project evaluations. It is not intended as a standard template for evaluations. Or a list for projects to work through: not all of the questions will apply to all projects; and (a bit of belt and braces means that) different questions may result in the same information. But it is important to see the 7 main points reflected in the evaluation, even if a contribution is sought from the sponsor as well as the project manager for the 7th.

Firstly, and absolutely crucially, we review the work...

Before the project started

1. Clarity of Objectives Outcomes Targets and Measures.
 - How clear are the objectives of the project? Are they well defined?
 - Are they quantified?
 - Has quantification been translated into financial benefits (cost savings/ customer benefits) through a net present value calculation? Has some other measure been used?

Having set out the aims we start...

Looking back at the project and what it achieved

2. The Outcomes of the project
 - How has it performed against these targets?
3. How effective was the project in achieving its objectives?
 - How much of the outcome can be attributed to the project and how much to other factors (e.g. underlying trends or wider initiatives that complemented the project)?
 - What would have happened under the do-nothing option?
 - Is it possible to compare the project with a 'control group', who experience the same influences but are excluded from the project?
 - Has there been a demonstrable improvement in the quality of service delivery as measured by, for example, customer surveys/feedback?
4. The cost effectiveness of the project
 - Was the project cost effective? Could the same or better outcome have been delivered with fewer resources? The lessons of delivering the project
 - Was the project delivered on time and within budgeted costs?
5. What are the key lessons for the delivery of the project and what have you done to disseminate them?
 - How did the partnership operate? At what stage were objectives agreed? Was there conflict? How was consensus reached? What decision-making and steering

- mechanisms were employed? Who held accountability for delivery? Was this shared?
- How significant was the change in delivery (incremental or transformational)? Did the organisations have experience of using technology before the project?
 - If the project involved E-delivery, how was take-up addressed and was this strategy successful? What support mechanisms were put in place to assist customers to use electronic services?
 - How was progress monitored against: a) delivery milestones; b) target outcomes?
 - If the project involved the private sector, what techniques were used to ensure that suppliers delivered on time and to the required quality?
 - If you were doing it again, what would you do differently?
 - What have you done to disseminate these?
6. Once strategy and objectives were set, how smooth was implementation?
- What went wrong or could have been done better?
 - How did leadership address the change and bring the organisation on board? How has the project changed the organisations involved positives and negatives?
 - What would you advise to an organisation about to undertake a similar project?
 - Were there significant cultural issues that influenced success/failure in certain areas?

So that's what's happened. But we don't run the ISB just to stop there. Its time to consider...

Looking forward from the project

7. The next stage for this project
- What is the next stage for the project?
 - Is it being continued? Who has taken the decision to continue to support it?
 - In what ways will it be modified?
 - Is the approach being exported to similar (perhaps different geographically) organisations? Is adding new services or innovations enhancing it?
 - Have other organisations shown interest in the project?
8. Implications for future policy (perhaps more questions for project sponsors, but worth taking account of views from project managers if they have them)
- Are there any wider implications for policy in this area?
 - Would it be possible to roll out the approach nationally? How could this be done? Is there a central responsible organisation? Could this be imposed?
 - Are there other services for which this approach might prove successful?