European Commission

Creative Communications for Evaluation Dissemination

How-to Guide:

Evaluation Dissemination Seminars

This How-to Guide is prepared by the Evaluation Support Service of the DG INTPA

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Directorate International Partnership

INTRODUCTION

An Evaluation Dissemination Seminar is one of the most important steps in the dissemination phase. This is where evaluation findings are communicated to key stakeholders via an online or in-person event. The event can be held in the country concerned or elsewhere depending on the evaluand[1] and the stakeholders.

In an evaluation dissemination seminar[2], you can share findings from the evaluation as a whole or specific aspects such as key learning, recommendations, or the experience of using different methods and tools. Investing sufficient time and resources to share the evaluation findings appropriately will help to maximise the usefulness of the learning captured by the evaluation and increase the impact of the evaluation process. Seminars require some preparation in terms of budgeting and planning. These guidelines provide you with some practical tips and references to additional resources to get you started.

WHY AN EVALUATION SEMINAR?

An evaluation seminar is a great way to engage your audience. It also enables you to:

▶ Transmit the key messages of the evaluation to relevant audiences concerned by the evaluated intervention (feedback).
▶ Report to the authorities and institutions concerned and reinforce the democratic use of evaluations (accountability).
▶ Promote and facilitate knowledge transfer at all levels (learning).
▶ Influence opinions throughout society at large (promoting change)[3].
▶ Discuss the conclusions of the evaluation in an easy, accessible way, providing an opportunity to discuss these first-hand with the stakeholders.
▶ Direct the audience to the full evaluation report or other evaluation knowledge products, such as blogs, podcasts, and briefs if they would like to delve into more detail.
▶ Increase interest and ownership of the evaluation findings amongst key stakeholders.
▶ Cater to different learning styles with the use of visual, audio, and interactive formats.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Seminar participants could include:

▶ Partner government officials
▶ Evaluators/technical experts
▶ EU Delegation colleagues
▶ Commission services interested, affected or impacted by the conclusions and recommendations
▶ Other EU institutions
▶ Academia, Research Think Tanks & Media (external experts)

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1   An evaluand is the subject of the evaluation, typically a programme or system rather than a person, (Michael Morris, 2008. Evaluation Ethics for Best Practice).

2   'Evaluation seminar' or 'seminar' from here on.

3   INTPA Evaluation Methodological Approach, Utilisation. Available at: https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/evaluation_guidelines/wiki/utilisation-0#anchor5.

- Member States
- Other donors
- Civil Society
- The wider public in Europe, in partner countries and beyond

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

Dissemination activities typically involve cooperation between:

- the evaluation manager,
- the evaluation team (if this is specifically mentioned in the Terms of Reference)
- members of the reference group.

(It is the responsibility of the evaluation manager/s to assign tasks and responsibilities appropriately.[4])

HOW MUCH TIME?

The duration of an evaluation seminar will depend on a number of factors, including the content, number of participants, and whether it is online or in person but typically would run for between 0.5 and 1 day. The time required for planning an evaluation seminar needs to be factored in.

Check the section below on 'Tips to Guide an Evaluation Seminar' and think through the various steps in detail while constructing the ToR with the evaluation reference group, and during the Inception Stage of the evaluation with the evaluation team.

HOW MUCH MONEY?

The cost of holding an evaluation seminar in the partner country or elsewhere depends on a variety of factors, that may include:

In person (face to face) evaluation seminar:

- Venue and refreshments (depends on the number of participants),
- Fees and other costs for invited expert(s) (not part of the evaluation team)
- Staff time required for planning purposes
- Handouts, evaluation briefs/summaries
- Interpretation/translation fees

Online evaluation seminar:

- Online webinar platform license/fee (dependent on the number of anticipated participants and required tools)
- Fees if there is an external moderator (s)
- Fees for invited expert(s) who is not part of the evaluation team
- Staff time required for planning purposes
- Handouts, evaluation briefs/summaries
- Interpreter/ translation fees

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4   INTPA Evaluation Methodological Approach, Utilisation. Available at: https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/evaluation_guidelines/wiki/utilisation-0#anchor5.

TIPS TO GUIDE YOUR EVALUATION SEMINAR PLANNING

Decide on target audience & purpose

The critical firsts steps are deciding what you want to communicate, how you want the evaluation results to be used and who you want to attend the seminar. Prioritize the most important stakeholders to communicate with and at what level (operational/strategic)

PLANNING

1 Identify some key objectives

Start by asking yourself what you want to achieve. You might want to share your findings with a wide audience to raise awareness of issues covered by the evaluation or to encourage project stakeholder engagement, participation, and feedback. This first strategic step will guide how you define the rest the rest of your activities.

2 Map your target audience

Decide who you want your evaluation results to reach, for which purposes, and what their general characteristics might be. Having a deeper understanding of your audience can impact the success of the event. Who will be most engaged with your evaluation findings? Who might find it most valuable? What message do you want them to take away? Get to know your target audiences, their needs and expectations, as well as their preferred communication channels and align your messages for the seminar accordingly.

3 Respect diversity

Assess how the key messages are framed, and if the chosen format and content is appropriate to all targeted audiences. The evaluation findings should reach all people who might be affected by them. Ensure inclusivity by creating messages that reflect and respect diversity in terms of gender, demography, and ability. Overcoming geographic barriers is also important, as well as the consideration of differences in time zones and the other commitments that potential participants might have.

4 Define the key messages

Think from the audience perspective – what might they want or need to hear and learn about. Choosing the medium and format of your communication strongly depends on your communication objectives, i.e., what you want to achieve.

Inclusion in the Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR)

▶ All details related to evaluation dissemination activities should be detailed in the terms of reference of the evaluation.

▶ These dissemination details need to be considered in the inception phase of the evaluation to ensure there is sufficient budget and feasible plans.
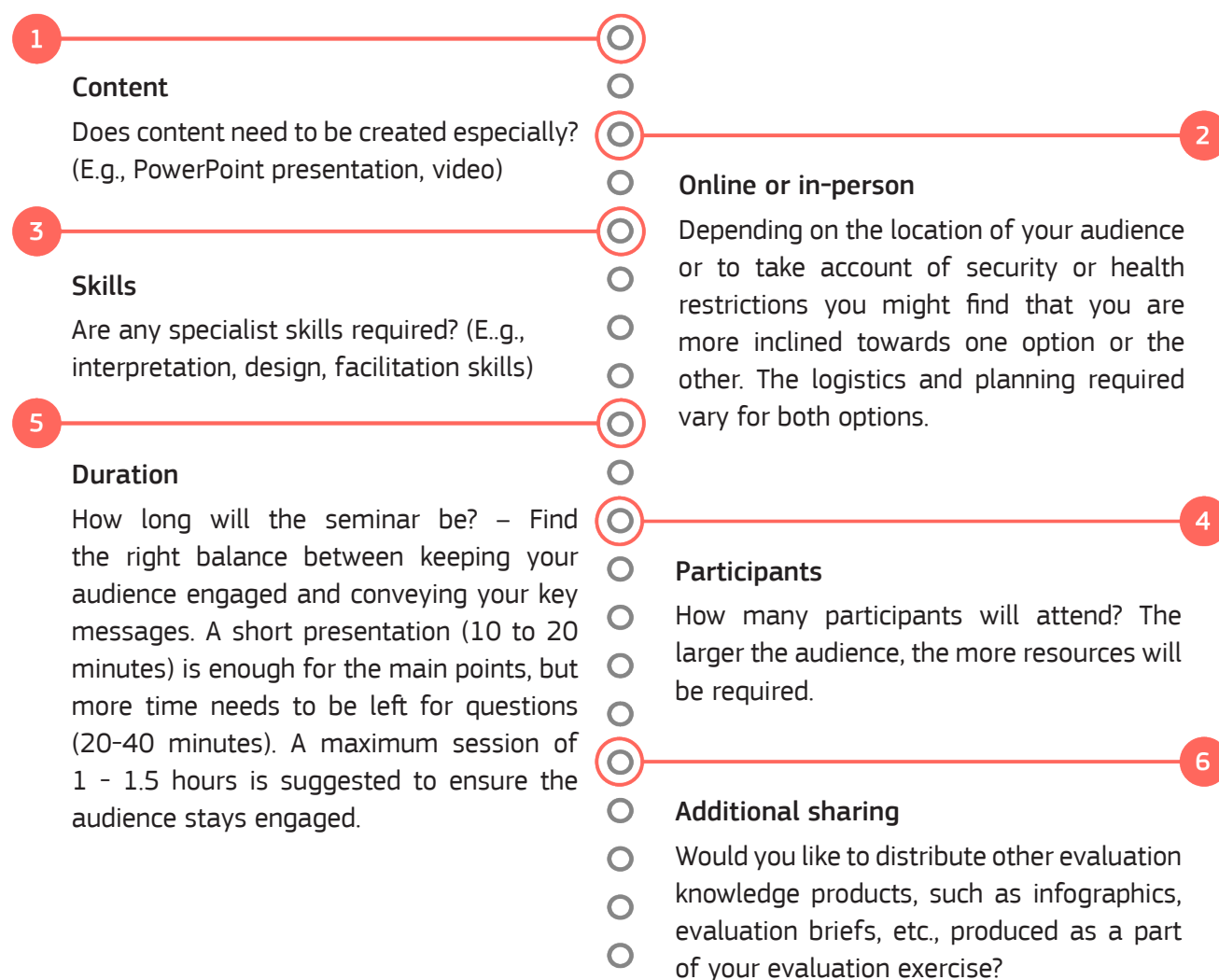
Key messages could cover:

▸ The evaluated intervention – Who implemented it, when and with what resources? What were the outputs, objectives, and rationale? What was the intervention logic?

▸ The evaluation – Who decided on the evaluation and why? Who conducted the evaluation and who is responsible for the conclusions? Which part of the intervention was evaluated, and which questions were asked?

▸ Messages resulting from the evaluation – A few particularly important messages from the point of view of the people participating in the seminar (key data, findings, conclusions, transferable lessons and/or recommendations).

▸ Strengths and weaknesses of the messages – Explanation of the methodology employed and reasons for which a particular message is valid or fragile. Recommendations for using fragile messages, (C4D, Utilisation Guidelines,

Ensure sufficient time for preparation

The planning required for an evaluation dissemination seminar can take anywhere between a few days to several weeks/months. Factors influencing the time required include the key messages you want to convey, to whom and how. Consider the following questions:

1

Content

Does content need to be created especially? (E.g., PowerPoint presentation, video)

2

Online or in-person

Depending on the location of your audience or to take account of security or health restrictions you might find that you are more inclined towards one option or the other. The logistics and planning required vary for both options.

3

Skills

Are any specialist skills required? (E..g., interpretation, design, facilitation skills)

4

Participants

How many participants will attend? The larger the audience, the more resources will be required.

5

Duration

How long will the seminar be? – Find the right balance between keeping your audience engaged and conveying your key messages. A short presentation (10 to 20 minutes) is enough for the main points, but more time needs to be left for questions (20-40 minutes). A maximum session of 1 – 1.5 hours is suggested to ensure the audience stays engaged.

6

Additional sharing

Would you like to distribute other evaluation knowledge products, such as infographics, evaluation briefs, etc., produced as a part of your evaluation exercise?

Find suitable dates (consider time differences and public holidays)

Understanding the potential constraints of your audience is important. Public holidays should be avoided where possible and time zone differences should be taken into consideration to ensure maximum attendance from your identified audience. You may find that you will need to conduct more than one seminar to ensure that people from different time zones are able to attend.

Consider the required skills to conduct the evaluation seminar

Depending on the purpose and target audience, you may require specific skills which should be considered when deciding who will be involved with what, for example:

PLANNING

1 Good **presentation and facilitation skills** will be essential.

2 The ability to **simplify and translate complex messages** may be required.

3 The capacity to produce **graphics & data visualizations** using the evaluations results.

4 Logistic skills to **organize** an in-person event and manage advertising and registration.

5 Competence in using **IT presentation devices** (e.g., Whiteboard, microphone etc.)

6 Proficiency in using **online webinar platforms and functions** such as screenshare, polls, chat, breakout rooms and translation if conducting the seminar online.

NB: Consider including **budget for additional technical capacity** in the evaluation ToR.

Remember you are not alone!

Share your idea(s) and your draft plans with colleagues and work with your Communications focal point if you are working in an EU Delegation. Other options include the Communication Unit of DG INTPA, INTPA 04 and the Evaluation Support Service to seek further guidance on best practices and to scope potential technical support options during the planning phase and on the day of the seminar.

Think about the audience experience

A seminar provides a great opportunity to engage your audience in various ways. Consider the following:

1 Learning styles

Everyone has different learning styles; therefore, a range of mediums can be incorporated – visual infographics and facts/figures/images to illustrate key points, short audio or video clips, and interactive activities such as polls and time for questions can be very effective additions.

2 Breaking the ice

You can try to make the audience feel welcome from the offset – start the session with a round of quick introductions before delving into the presentation of findings. If conducting the seminar online the audience can be asked to introduce themselves in the chat function. Music can also help to lighten the mood in the first few minutes as participants arrive.

3 Inclusivity: language

Ensure that the language you use is adapted to your audience and geographic location. This includes avoiding technical jargon unless for an audience of experts. Consider the use of an interpreter or, for online platforms, subtitling to increase user engagement.

4 Inclusivity: gender

If possible – ensure that there is a balanced gender representation between presenters.

Choose your dissemination channels wisely

There are various platforms such as your DG and/or Delegation websites and other social media channels where the details about your evaluation seminar can be shared. The most appropriate place to share it depends on your agreed target audience. It is good practice to brainstorm the different channels during the early stages of planning to ensure that you are aware of the processes to follow for each channel. Leverage any relevant existing networks to help amplify messages.

Consider recording the session for future use

Depending on the nature of the evaluation, it could be a good idea to record the dissemination seminar. This will enable you to share the findings with those who are not able to attend, and it will help ensure that dissemination goes beyond the seminar and the time when the evaluation is released. Ideally, the findings of the evaluation (and InfoPoint recording of the seminar) should be published on the Capacity 4Dev platform or externally if appropriate and tagged correctly so that they can be found at a later stage. NB: You will need to first check that your audience is happy to be recorded (online or in person). You also need to bear in mind that recording the session might impact the engagement of the seminar participants.

Evaluate the seminar

Before closing the seminar, ask your participants for feedback. What did they learn? What was the best part of the seminar? What was the least interesting part?

Be selective with your questions – don't ask too many but do ask what is most useful for you to learn which approaches to sharing learning are most effective.

You can also record the number of participants, views of the page, downloads of any document links shared and number of times the seminar was mentioned in other documents to gauge how successful the dissemination was.

Additional Dissemination Activities to support the Evaluation Seminars

The production of communication products based on evaluation results is an excellent way to support the use and uptake of those results. These products could be shared in an evaluation dissemination seminar to communicate the findings and recommendations of an evaluation exercise.

Please find here five different 'How to Guidelines on Evaluation Dissemination[1]'. They provide guidance for evaluation managers and colleagues on how to present evaluation results in creative ways. e.g., blogs, podcasts, briefs, videos, and infographics. These products could be shared with the participants of the Evaluation Dissemination Seminar prior to or during the event, to better communicate learning from your evaluation as a whole, or to communicate on a specific aspect of it, e.g., evaluation results or recommendations.

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1   https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/evaluation_guidelines/wiki/how-guides-evaluation-dissemination

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1 **Evaluation Dissemination and Use**

▸ Section 7 of [Evaluation Policy]: Evaluation Dissemination and Use – This chapter explains why Evaluation Dissemination and use is important.

▸ The EC "Better Regulations", Toolbox-50 (https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/file_import/better-regulation-toolbox-50_en_0.pdf)

▸ EvalCrisis Blog-09 on Dissemination (https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/devco-ess/news/eval-crisis-blog-09-disseminate-till-you-drop)

▸ Wiki Note on Evaluation Guidelines (https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/evaluation_guidelines/wiki/utilisation-0#anchor5)

2 **Presentation Templates**

▸ Need inspiration? Look out for guidance on 'Documents Presenting the Evaluation' (e.g., PowerPoint slides) available on the EU Capacity4Dev website, here: https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/evaluation_guidelines/wiki/utilisation-0#anchor5

TYPES OF EVALUATION DISSEMINATION SEMINARS

Evaluation Dissemination Seminars can be organised in a variety of ways and for various audiences and purposes. Please find below some suggested types, participants and objectives.

In person @ EC INTPA Headquarters in Brussels

- EU-institutions, academia, civil society, etc.
- Learning about the evaluation results

In person with target populations

- Stakeholders from the selected community(ies)
- Learning about the evaluation results & providing feedback

Online via a webinar platform

- Government and other actors, and stakeholders from the target population
- Learning about the evaluation results & providing feedback

In country (national level)

- Government departments, academia, civil society organisations, UN bodies, other donors, think tanks, etc
- Learning about the evaluation results

In country (local level)

- Local government officials, academia, civil society organisations, UN bodies, other donors, think tanks, etc.
- Learning about the evaluation results

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