

# Decision tree for the evaluation of science communication

What are the project's goals and objectives?  
Based on the target group and the intended effects on that group, a suitable communication channel and format should be chosen.

How is the project designed?  
The **size** of the project, its **setting** (digital, hybrid or on-site) and **time frame** should be considered when planning an evaluation. These characteristics influence the choice of evaluation design, study design, methods and data sources.

start here →

What is of interest for the evaluation?  
First, it is important to be very clear about the **motives** for conducting the evaluation and the questions the evaluation should answer. Depending on how much prior knowledge exists, it is either an **exploratory** or an **explanatory** evaluation question (if applicable with hypotheses to be tested).

The **project's objectives** are only crucial for evaluation planning **if the evaluation intends to verify the achievement of those objectives**. In this case, strategies must be developed in order to find evidence of "meeting or missing" the project's objectives. Under these circumstances, **such objectives also inform the choice of data that needs to be collected**.

Which evaluation design is suitable?  
Whether a **summative** evaluation, a **formative** evaluation or a **hybrid** version is most suitable depends on the main interest of the evaluation. The focus might be on first results during the project and its processes, final results towards the end of a project, or both.

What study design is required?  
The study design determines the **strategy for data collection**. This strategy is based on whether the evaluation focuses on a **specific moment** of the project or a **development or change**. The former can be done with a one-off data collection, the latter requires **comparative data**, either through multiple data collection phases or group comparisons. Next, the right **timing** for data collection(s) is determined. Finally, it is decided whether a **full data collection** is possible. Otherwise, a **sample** will be drawn.

Are qualitative or quantitative methods used (or both)?  
If data is collected and analyzed in a **standardized manner** in order to **determine general trends**, quantitative methods should be used. If a **deeper understanding of single cases** is of interest, qualitative methods are recommended. Qualitative methods provide a useful basis for explorative evaluation questions and quantitative methods can be used to test explanative evaluation questions.

What information are of interest? What data needs to be collected?  
Once it has been decided which questions the evaluation aims to answer, the **information necessary** to do so can be identified. This information can be found in the form of **numerical**, in **graphical** or in **textual** data.

Who has that information or what are the best data sources?  
Once it has been decided which information and data are required, appropriate sources must be identified. When doing so, it is important to consider which sources are **most easily accessible** and appear to be the **most reliable**.

What method for data collection is suitable?  
In general, a distinction can be made between **direct methods of data collection** (e.g., observations, content analyses) and **indirect methods** (e.g., self-report methods such as questionnaires and interviews). The choice depends on where the desired data can be found, which method is more reliable in the setting of the project evaluation, and whether the method is suitable for the chosen qualitative or quantitative logic of data analysis.