Sustainability Evaluation Checklist

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Introduction

** Indicates terms explained in the glossary*

Purpose: Why use the SEC?

The Sustainability* Evaluation* Checklist* (SEC) is intended for use in planning and designing project and program evaluations OF sustainability FOR sustainability within development contexts. As a tool, the SEC is designed to help users not only remember certain tasks involved in evaluation but also consider a wide array of criteria of importance to sustainability evaluation. Thus, the checklist aims to:

(a) reduce errors of omission*

(b) increase evaluation usefulness

In addition to planning and designing sustainability evaluations, the SEC may also be used to:

(a) generate ideas and discussion on key issues in sustainability evaluation

(b) support proposal writing processes

(c) compare existing sustainability evaluations to determine whether all important aspects have been met

Intended users: Who should use the SEC?

The SEC is intended as a guide for individuals who are frequently involved in internal* or external* evaluations of development projects or programs with a special interest in sustainability. These users may include:

(a) Evaluators and researchers who provide evaluation services

(b) Program planners, funders, and managers with an interest in evaluation

(c) Program recipients/participants/users who start their own evaluations

(d) Others who have an interest in evaluation

Experienced evaluators may benefit from the comprehensive nature of the checklist and use it as a point of reference or generator of ideas. Novice evaluators or those with limited exposure to evaluation may find value in the instructional elements of the checklist.

Characteristics: What are the parts of the SEC?

The checklist is built on Scriven's (1982) and Fournier's (1995) logic of evaluation and consists of two major parts: (A) general considerations and (B) criteria* of merit*, worth*, and significance*.

The general considerations, Part A, are subdivided into three sections: (1) grounding the evaluation, (2) about the evaluand*, and (3) general procedures for evaluation. As suggested by the title of the section, this part includes aspects of relevance in any evaluation. But it is imbued with elements of specific relevance to sustainability evaluations. For example, section 1 intends to clarify different perspectives on sustainability evaluation dependent on the time at which sustainability is assessed; section 2 looks at dimensions OF and FOR sustainability; and section three provides guidelines on the general procedures. This third section also provides the connection to part (B).

In part (B), criteria for evaluating sustainability are distinguished by (4) importance, (5) merit, and (6) worth. These criteria have been developed based on an extensive literature review and feedback from sustainability evaluation experts and practitioners. Section 4 looks at aspects that help determine whether sustainability is relevant in a given situation. Section 5 considers those aspects that enlighten capacity FOR sustainability, and supports determining if and to what extent aspects continue after initial resources are reduced or removed. Section 6 looks specifically at costs.

Because the checklist is relatively generic, users may find value in the "heuristic" characteristics of the checklist. That means it stimulates thinking that may encourage discussion within organizations and among evaluators, clients, stakeholders, and impactees.

Key concepts: What terms need to be understood to use the SEC?

Sustainability

> The capacity to exist (e.g., projects, programs, mankind) and/or continue (e.g., human, social, economic, and/or environmental benefits*****).
>
> For programs, this usually means existence (temporal durability) beyond termination of initial support via mechanisms that have been used to develop the program. In terms of continued benefits, it means that programming does not negatively impact human survival on earth. For example, attitudes or practice may be eliminated/ eradicated to allow for sustainable development of societies. That means not everything should be sustained nor is intended to be sustained.

Evaluation

The systematic determination of merit (quality), worth (value), and significance (importance)

In contrast to research, evaluation comprises the determination of criteria, setting standards on these criteria, data collection to inform criteria, and synthesis of the descriptive and factual information with the criteria to enable decision making about the object under evaluation (i.e., evaluand) within a set timeframe. While knowledge generation is part of many evaluations and usually a side effect, it is not the primary concern.

Evaluation OF sustainability

The determination of the merit, worth, and significance of efforts to continue a given evaluand (i.e., evaluation object) beyond the removal of initial program resources: What is the level of sustainability of your evaluand? How well is the evaluand sustained? Should it be sustained?

Evaluation FOR sustainability

The determination of the merit, worth, and significance in maintaining, replicating, and exporting a given evaluand's positive (un)intended *outcomes* and *impacts* under specific consideration of global sustainability issues. How well does the evaluand contribute to sustainable development efforts (human, social, economic, and environmental dimensions)?

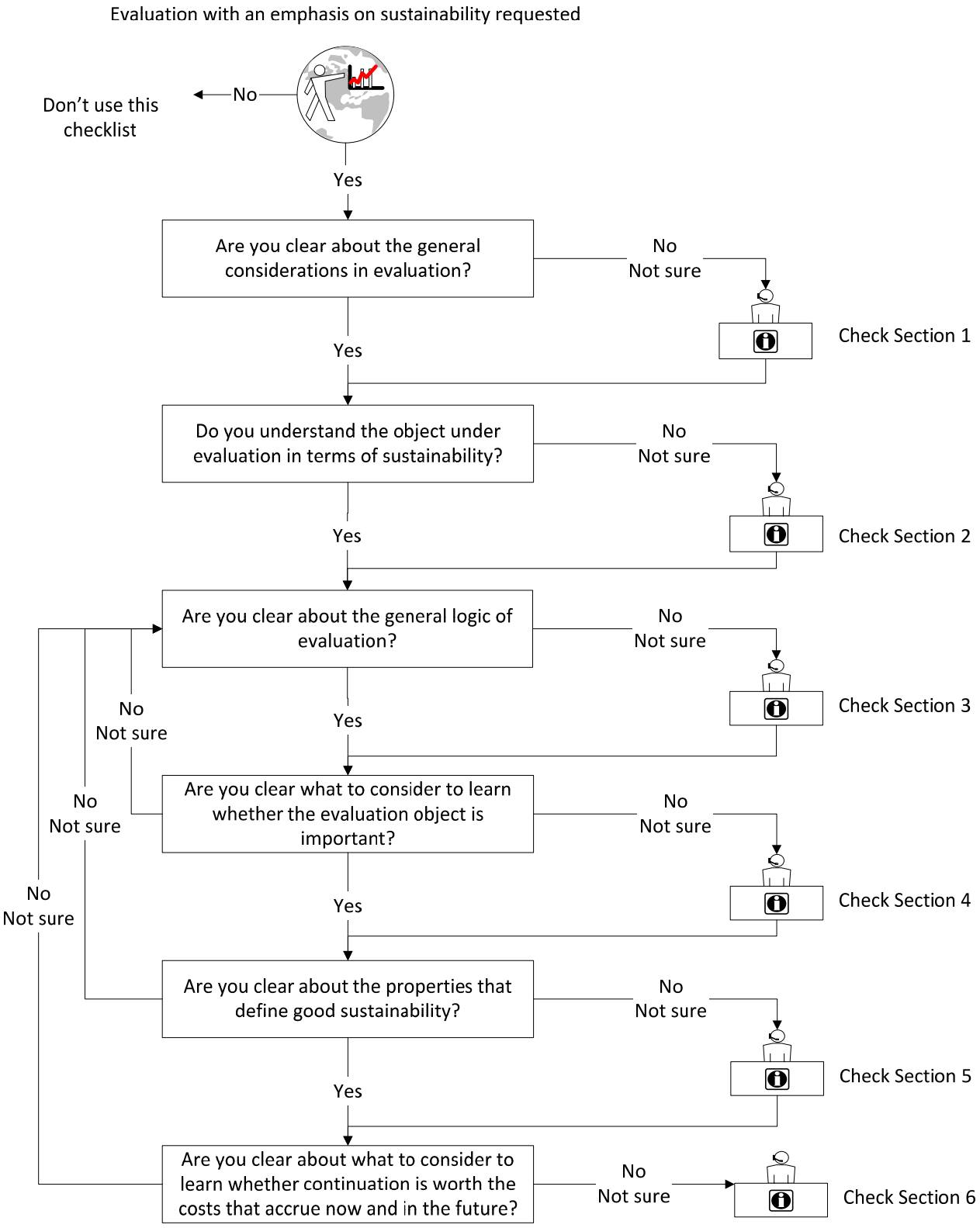
Checklist

A tool that guides evaluation efforts, also known as, a framework for conducting evaluation. The SEC specifically can be compared to a heuristic that encourages critical thinking about sustainability evaluation.

Guidance: How to use the SEC?

The flow chart below is intended to provide guidance on how to use the checklist. You may also screen the summary table (after the flow chart) to determine whether specific aspects of the checklist might be of relevance to you.

SEC Flow Chart



SEC Quick Guide

Please consider this summary table to determine which aspects to further explore in the SEC.

Part A – General considerations in evaluation	Clear	Needs clarification
Section 1: Grounding the EVALUATION		
☐ Direction of the evaluation	☐	☐
☐ User of findings	☐	☐
☐ Purpose(s) of the evaluation	☐	☐
☐ Roles of the evaluation team	☐	☐
☐ Composition of the evaluation team	☐	☐
☐ Timeframe under evaluation	☐	☐
☐ Key questions	☐	☐
☐ Type of evaluation	☐	☐
☐ Metaevaluation	☐	☐
☐ Dissemination of findings	☐	☐
☐ Evaluation management	☐	☐
Section 2: About the EVALUAND		
☐ The evaluation object	☐	☐
☐ Components of the evaluation object	☐	☐
☐ Sustainability dimensions	☐	☐
☐ Local historical Context	☐	☐
☐ Stakeholders	☐	☐
☐ Impactees	☐	☐
☐ Reach	☐	☐
Section 3: General procedures for evaluation		
☐ Identify criteria	☐	☐
☐ Set standards	☐	☐
☐ Collect data	☐	☐
☐ Synthesize	☐	☐

Part B – Criteria	Not relevant	Relevant
Section 4: Significance: Is the continuation of the evaluand important?		
☐ Needs for human sustainability	☐	☐
☐ Needs for social sustainability	☐	☐
☐ Needs for economic sustainability	☐	☐
☐ Needs for environmental sustainability	☐	☐
☐ Scope and duration	☐	☐
☐ Risks and vulnerability	☐	☐
Section 5: Merit (Quality): What are the properties which define good sustainability without consideration of cost?		
☐ Use of evidence from monitoring and evaluation	☐	☐
☐ Appreciation of knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies		
☐ Leadership competencies	☐	☐
☐ Organizational characteristics	☐	☐
☐ Infrastructure	☐	☐
☐ Collaboration/involvement	☐	☐
☐ Understanding the community and its environmental context		
☐ Responsiveness	☐	☐
☐ Goal orientation	☐	☐
☐ Positive and negative impacts over time	☐	☐
Section 6: Worth: Is the continuation of the evaluand or its outcomes worth the costs that accrue now and in the future?		
☐ Time at which costs/resources are accrued	☐	☐
☐ Stakeholders and impactees, to whom monetary and nonmonetary costs accrue		
☐ Facets of cost	☐	☐
☐ Specific costs or resource use	☐	☐
☐ Resource renewal	☐	☐

Notes:

Sustainability can be evaluated as an element in its own right or as part of a comprehensive evaluation. Linkages to process, outcome, and impact evaluations exist. Sustainability is inherent in:

- Persistence of the institution
- Persistence of program activities, services, interventions (this includes transferability to other contexts or replication of programming)
- Persistence of resulting changes for individuals (humans), society (e.g., culture, institutions, etc.), economy, and the environment

Not all components in the checklist are relevant in all cases or for each unique manifestation of sustainability. It is your responsibility to consider what is or is not relevant for a given situation. You may want to engage in discussions with stakeholders and impactees to determine which aspects are of special importance in your case.

The SEC does not denote levels of sustainability performance, because these levels may vary for each sector, type of project, and region, nor does it prescribe the use of each checkpoint. Instead it suggests a holistic strategy to evaluation planning and design with an emphasis on sustainability evaluation, which often comprises a part of an evaluation, rather than an evaluation on its own.

Efforts will be made to maximize the checklists user-friendliness for all individuals. Special efforts will be made to address the need of people with disabilities. Your feedback on how to best serve you as well as other groups is very welcome.

The SEC will be posted online at www.sustainabilityeval.net

Efforts will be made to interlink items to better reflect cross-linkages inherent in the concept sustainability as well as in the process of evaluation

The SEC is a continuous work in progress and will be revised according to new insights and feedback. If you use the SEC, please share your experience with me:

- What works?
- What doesn't work?
- Do you have any cases or examples that could be shared with users of the SEC?

Part A – General considerations in evaluation

The following checkpoints should be discussed among evaluation team members, the evaluation client, and key evaluation stakeholders to clarify information needs, resources, methodological decisions, required levels of detail, and evaluation management. They comprise general considerations in evaluation that have been specified for sustainability concerns. In addition, you may also want to consider other evaluation checklists available at:

http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/checklistmenu.htm

Section 1: Grounding the EVALUATION

These general considerations are of major importance for planning the evaluation. Most are general concerns that apply to any evaluation.

- **Direction:** Who asked for the evaluation?
  - Bottom-up*: Was the evaluation initiated on the ground at the local project level (e.g., is driven by middle range or grassroots actors, focusing on a specific project)?
  - Top-down*: Was the evaluation requested by the donor/funder of the program (i.e., the evaluation begins on the highest level)? Sustainability may only be one dimension to consider among others (e.g., by the DAC criteria*)
  - Peer-evaluation: Is the evaluation initiated and implemented by recipients/participants/ users of the evaluation object.
  - Mixed directions

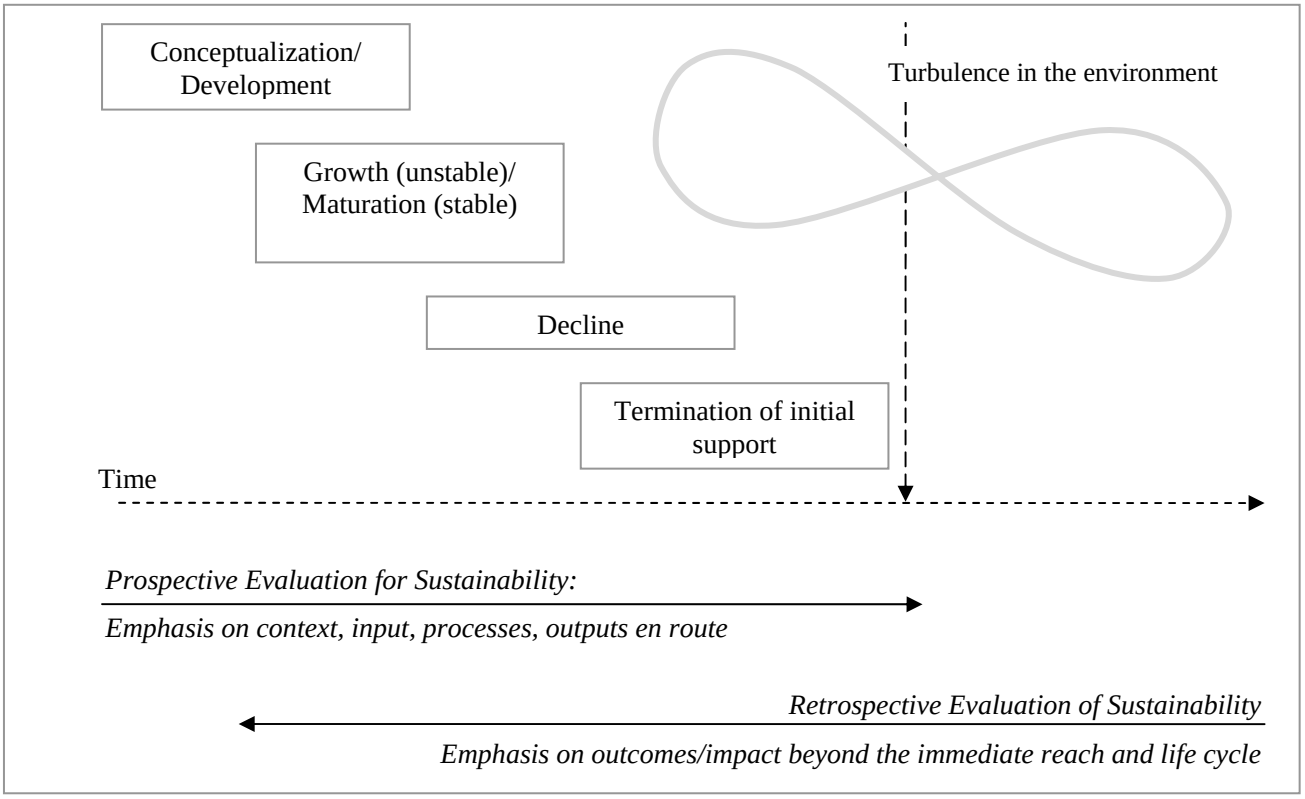
- **Users:** Who are the intended users of findings from the evaluation?
  - Evaluation-funders (e.g., donors)
  - Decision-makers
  - Individuals who are engaged in program implementation (e.g., administrators, staff, volunteers)
  - Current and potential participants/recipients of the program/services
  - Partners/collaborators
  - Others (who else should know learn about the findings to maximize transparency and use of the evaluation)

- **Purpose(s):** Why is the evaluation being conducted?
    - Improvement-oriented (formative*): Is it the intent of the evaluation to improve the sustainability of an evaluand and/or its outcomes and impacts? What works? What does not work?
    - Decision-making (summative*): Is it the intent of the evaluation to inform decision making about the program? Does the program meet the needs of its intended users? How do costs compare with the benefits? Can outcomes be linked to the programming?
    - Accountability*: Are funds being used for intended purposes? Has the program been implemented as designed?
    - Knowledge generation (ascriptive*): Is it the intent of the evaluation to generate knowledge about: How sustainability is manifest within an evaluand? Why certain aspects of an evaluand are sustainable or not? What elements contribute to or hinder sustainability? What factors affect the continuation of an evaluand and/or its impacts on sustainable development?
    - Development*: How does the program affect sustainable development at large? What can the program impact and what not? What can it control or not control?
    - Monitoring*: Is the program going smoothly? Is funding stable? Is participation increasing or decreasing?
    - Multiple purposes

- **Roles of the evaluator/evaluation team**: What is the role of the evaluation team?
    - Internal evaluation team (e.g., staff members, funders, donors, clients, other stakeholders, participants/recipients)
    - External evaluation team (e.g., independent consultants or other external entity)
    - Mixed (e.g., the evaluator as a critical, but external, friend collaborating with internal members; collaborative evaluation)

- **Composition of the evaluation team:** Who will and will not participate in the evaluation?
    - What competencies are needed? (e.g., evaluation-specific, research methodology, statistics, qualitative data analyst, content area expertise, sector specific expertise, transdisciplinary expertise, administrative support, etc.)
    - Where will the evaluation take place? (e.g., potential language constraints, need for translator, cultural expertise, local guide and cultural expert)

- **Timeframe of the evaluand:** In what lifecycle stage is the evaluand (see Figure below)?
    - Prospective/Ex-ante evaluation:
        - Conceptualization and/or development: Sustainability is being considered pro-actively
    - Prospective/Ex-ante evaluation AND/OR Retrospective/Ex-post evaluation
        - Growth and/or maturation: The level and breath of sustainability are considered
        - Reduction of initial funding resources: The stability of the evaluand and its outcomes and impacts are considered in terms of reduced resources or altered funding streams
        - Termination of initial funding resources: The stability of the evaluand as well as of the breadth and depth of outcomes and impacts are considered once initial resources have been terminated and funding streams adjusted to the new situation
    - Retrospective/Ex-post evaluation
        - After initial funding has ended: The stability of the evaluand as well as of the breadth and depth of outcomes and impacts are considered months, ideally years, after initial resources have been terminated and funding streams adjusted to the new situation (see termination of initial funding resources, the same considerations in a longer time frame)



- **Key questions: What needs to be understood or learned about?**
  - Evaluation OF sustainability:
    - What is the level of sustainability of the evaluand at this time?
    - How well is the evaluand sustained?
    - Should sustainability be maintained?
  - Evaluation FOR sustainability:
    - How well does the evaluand contribute to sustainable development in the long term?
    - How can sustainability of the evaluand be maximized?

- **Type of evaluation:** How will you undertake your sustainability evaluation?
  - Holistic:* Do you need to have a general understanding about the sustainability of your evaluation object?
    - The breadth and depth of sustainability of the whole evaluand is considered without separating parts and/or dimensions. This is usually an evaluation conducted by an expert.
  - Analytic:* Do you need to learn about the sustainability of specific components* or dimensions* of your evaluand? Or do you need to know whether the underlying theory* works in terms of sustainability?
    - Component evaluation: For example, an international development program may be implemented in different locations, have varying activities, and/or use differing policy instruments. Each element is evaluated separately before making judgments about the program as a whole.
    - Dimensional evaluation: Sustainability can be treated as a dimension in its own and could be combined with other dimensions of importance in international development (e.g., relevance, cost-effectiveness, efficiency, efficacy, etc.)
    - Theory-driven evaluation: Based on a program's logic model, linkages between inputs, activities, immediate, intermediate, and long-term outcomes and impacts are examined to determine whether assumptions about the program are correct and if causality between program elements exists
  - Mixed forms of the above

- **MetaEvaluation*:** Will the evaluation be evaluated? How will it be evaluated and by whom?
  - Utility: Does the evaluation meet the information needs of intended users?
  - Feasibility: Is the evaluation practical, politically viable, and cost effective?

- Propriety: Is the evaluation legally and morally sound?
- Accuracy: Is the evaluation technically sound?
- Note: Evaluation standards exist in several nations and organizations. These are often good points of reference for considering the quality of an evaluation. This checklist could also serve as a point of reference on how well a given sustainability evaluation was conducted, specifically whether the evaluation considered the critical element in sustainability evaluation

- **Dissemination of findings:** How are findings presented to users and other audiences? What presentation format(s) will facilitate learning for intended users?
  - Technical report
  - Briefing papers
  - One page summaries/memos
  - Presentations/workshops
  - Other

- **Evaluation management**
  - Costs and resources of the evaluation
  - Time available for the evaluation

Section 2: About the EVALUAND

This information is important for understanding the evaluand and its context. Checkpoints in this section are intended to clarify the nature of the thing under evaluation and its context. The key questions are: What, where, how, by whom?

- **Types of evaluation objects (evaluand):** What is being evaluated?
  - Policy*
  - Program*/Project*
  - Process*: Persistence of activities/services
  - Product/results/outcome/impact*: persistence of changes
  - Performance*
  - Organization* /Institution*
  - Other

- **Components of evaluation objects:** What does the evaluation object consist of?
  - Inputs* (monetary and nonmonetary resources, funding sources, in kind contributions, technology, etc.)
  - Activities/services/strategies
  - Outputs*/results (e.g., numbers who receive services/participated in activities)
  - Outcomes/Impacts (e.g., changes as a result of participation in activities, of receiving services, of collaborating, etc.)
  - Potential (un)intended impacts (e.g., long-term intended and unintended effects on people locally, regionally, nationally, etc.)

- **Sustainability dimensions of evaluation objects**:
  - Evaluation OF sustainability
    - Project-oriented* sustainability: continuation of components (see above) in the interest of the funder or for local use
    - Purpose/use-oriented* sustainability: adaptation of an evaluation object or components thereof for local use
    - Systems-oriented* sustainability: integration of an evaluation object or components thereof to improve performance across a system (institutionalization, routinization)
    - Behavior-oriented* sustainability: capacity to effectively adapt to environmental changes
  - Evaluation FOR sustainability
    - Human* sustainability: maintaining human capital such as health, education, knowledge, leadership, etc.
    - Social* sustainability (organizations and networks): maintaining social capital: culture, language, shared rules, laws, etc.
    - Economic*(financial) sustainability: keeping capital intact
    - Natural (environmental*) sustainability: Protecting natural capitals (e.g., water, land, air, minerals, etc.)

- **Local historical context**: What is the local historical evolutionary context? Have there been significant changes in the past?
  - Human: Culture, beliefs, perceptions
  - Social: Collaboration and partnerships
  - Economic: Nature of economy and investment patterns, funding agencies, community assets
  - Environmental: Local/regional challenges
  - Politics: Political support and risks

- Administrative: binding acts, decision makers commitment
- Technological innovation
- Resource availability: what natural, physical, human, monetary and nonmonetary (e.g., time) resources are available or unavailable

Context	*Past*	*Current*	*Projected*
☐ *Human*			
☐ *Social*			
☐ *Economic*			
☐ *Environmental*			
☐ *Political*			
☐ *Technological*			
☐ *Cultural*			
☐ …			

☐ **Stakeholders*:** Who can affect the evaluand and its sustainability?

- Internal stakeholders:
  - Individuals involved in implementing the project/program (e.g., staff, volunteers, partners)
  - Funders, governments, NGO's, etc.
  - Users/participants/recipients[1]
  - Others
- External stakeholders:
  - Supporters
  - Politicians
  - Dissidents/Protestors/Oppressors
  - Alternative stakeholders: those who could affect the evaluand and its sustainability either positively or negatively

[1] Commonly referred to as "beneficiaries." The terms "recipient(s), participant(s), and user(s) are preferred here to assure that benefits are not falsely attributed.

- **Impactees* of the evaluand:** Who is affected by the evaluand?
  - Internal impactees
    - Individuals involved in implementing the project/program (e.g., staff, volunteers, partners)
    - Funders, governments, NGO's, etc.
    - Users/participants/recipients
    - Others
  - External impactees
    - Family member, friends, business partners, colleagues, community members at large, attentive audiences, consumers
    - Alternative impactees: those who could have been impacted or protected from impact

- **Reach* of the evaluand:** How far do impacts potentially reach?
  - Space:
    - Local impacts on people
    - Sub-national impacts (i.e., multi-province, county, state, etc.)
    - National impacts on people
    - Multinational regional impacts on people
    - International (global) impacts on people
  - Time
    - In the past
    - In the present (now)
    - In the immediate future (1-10 years)
    - In the intermediate future (over a life time)
    - In the long-term (future generations)

Section 3: General procedures for evaluation

These procedures lay out the general logic of evaluation. It is up to the user to determine the best models and approaches to answer the specific questions in her context (i.e., choose the working logic). This also relates to the types of data collected and used within the evaluation. Ideally, an evaluation would employ mixed methods though the questions should determine the most appropriate methods in a given evaluation setting. This section builds on the previously clarified information about the evaluation and the evaluand.

- **Identify criteria*:** On what components or dimensions must your evaluand do well to be considered of good quality, value, and importance?
    - Specific sustainability related criteria are listed in Part B
    - Additional criteria* of relevance to your evaluation object can be identified via:
        - Needs assessment*: What are the most critical needs in the community that can be addressed by the evaluand?
        - Assets and opportunity assessment*: What assets and opportunities are in the community to meet the needs?
        - Risk/ vulnerability assessment*: What risks and vulnerabilities may prevent sustainability?
        - If no recent and/or valid assessments are available, conduct one to determine human, social, economic, and environmental needs and risks that the evaluand ought to address

- **Identify values* and set standards (e.g., targets):** What constitutes good/bad, worthless/worthwhile, relevant/not relevant? Are there grey areas? What is acceptable and what not? How will you know? How do we know what good means? Strategies to find out include:
        - Exploring organizational values: Are there any predetermined values and targets specified by the organization(s) responsible for the evaluand?
        - Considering the assets, needs, risk, and vulnerability assessment(s): what are the most severe needs, risks, and vulnerabilities and what community assets are available to relieve them?
        - Knowledge of legal and policy documents
        - Ethical standards
        - Human rights
        - Other
    - Are some criteria more important than others (weighting* the relative importance of the criteria)? Strategies to find out if this is the case include:
        - Having stakeholders and/or impactees vote
        - Using the knowledge of selected stakeholders or experts
        - Employing evidence from the literature
        - Using evidence from the needs, assets, vulnerability, and assets assessments
        - Using logic modeling and evidence of causal linkages

- Should criteria be graded* or ranked*?
  - Grading (rating): Assigning the evaluand or its components or dimensions to an ordered set of categories, with the order corresponding to a metric of merit, worth, and/or significance
  - Ranking: Placing the evaluand or its components or dimensions in an order of merit worth, and/or significance on the basis of their relative performance on a measurement or observation.
- What constitutes minimum acceptable standards (bars*) and other performance standards*?
  - Given the resources invested in the evaluation object, is there a minimum level of sustainability that has to be achieved on a given component, dimension, and/or overall?
  - Rubrics* can help explain how performance on the criteria will be rated: In your case, what does it means to perform inadequately, adequately, or exceptionally (you may want to choose a different type of scale)
  - Use the strategies above to inform minimum standards and rubrics

- **Collect data (measure/observe criteria) and compare with the standards:** How well did the evaluand perform?
  - What do you need to know to make decisions about how well the evaluand performs on a given criterion?
  - Are there any indicator* sets that inform the criteria of interest? You may want to consult indicator frameworks that have been developed by the sustainable development community (e.g.,
  - Who can provide the information?
    - People (see your list of stakeholders and/or impactees; i.e., consider those whose opinions may not be reflected in available written documents)
    - Organizations
    - Documents, the literature, previous evaluations, data from monitoring
    - Others
    - Note: Ask yourself for rationales for including and excluding specific information sources. Different stakeholders and impactees may have very differing perceptions about what is good, worthwhile, and important and bring differing perspectives

- Determine how to collect and analyze the needed data
  - By what means will you get the needed data: document and literature reviews, observations, tests, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, site visits, and/or other methods of data collection
  - Are data collection instruments available?
    - If not, develop instruments with input from key informants (consider your list of stakeholders and impactees)
    - Collect data on the quality of the instruments (reliability and validity) – remember that the product of the evaluation can only be as good as the technical rigor
  - Is it possible to collect data from varying sources to allow for triangulation of information and perspectives
  - Assure that data analytic strategies are adequate (reliable, valid, credible)
- Consider time and space dimensions of sustainability (cross reference)

- **Synthesis*:** Integrate data with the standards on criteria into a judgment of merit, worth, and/or significance
  - Integrate the data (ratings or grading on criteria) with the standards
  - Depending on whether you are doing a holistic or analytic evaluation, determine how the relative or absolute merit, worth, and/or significance will be determined
    - Grading and ranking provide unidimensional conclusions about components or dimensions
    - Profiling* provides multidimensional conclusions, usually depicting grades and comparative performance on components or criteria
  - Ensure that evaluative conclusions (claims) are legitimate
  - Identify strengths and weaknesses of the evaluative conclusions

Part B – Criteria of sustainability for sustainability

The following sections list potential criteria of significance, merit, and worth in sustainability evaluation. In contrast to indicators, criteria of sustainability are those properties of an evaluation object that are part of good sustainability in a given context

Section 4: Criteria of significance (importance)

Is the continuation of the evaluand important for sustainable development?

These criteria are specifically concerned with the relevancy of the investment. What is found to be important may vary by stakeholder and impactee groups and can differ by evaluand.

- ☐ **Needs for human sustainability*:**
  - Nutrition, shelter, clothes
  - Education, health, means of transportation and communication, safety
  - Belongingness, creativity, identity, autonomy, spirituality
  - Togetherness, participation
  - Self-fulfillment
  - Realization of potential
  - Other

- ☐ **Need for social sustainability*:**
  - Social norms, community cohesion for mutual benefit
  - Connectedness between groups of people
  - Cultural plurality
  - Solidarity
  - Tolerance, respect, compassion, patience, and honesty
  - Discipline
  - Commonly shared rules, laws, and information
  - Equity across gender, age, religions
  - Human rights
  - Peace
  - Participation in decision-making about planned interventions that affect people's lives

- Justice
- Accountability
- Self-reliance/dependency: specifically mobilization of communities, local ownership in decision making, commitment of local resources
- Politics
- Other

- **Needs for economic sustainability:**
  - Economic benefits to impactees and stakeholders
  - Reduced need for external assistance
  - Allocation of financial resources
  - Efficiency
  - Scale of consumption
  - Preventive anticipation
  - Cost-effectiveness under consideration of unduly costs
  - Paying for past ecological debt
  - Optimizing productivity
  - Use of human, natural and financial capital

- **Needs for environmental sustainability:**
  - Water, land, air, minerals, eco-system services
  - Environmental soundness of the intervention, its intended and unintended outcomes and impacts
  - Waste emissions within the assimilative capability of the environment without damaging it
  - Ecological balance and biodiversity
  - Balance in consumption/recycling of resources
  - Disaster risk reduction
  - Irreversible loss of species biodiversity, habitat, ecosystem

- **Scope and duration:**
  - Continuation of activities, service provision, or outputs
  - Replication, transfer, or export of the evaluand
  - Consider numbers and types of activities, services, and outputs as well as number of recipients/participants
  - Duration
  - Adaptation (at what point is what we intend to sustain changed to the degree to which we cannot call it the evaluand anymore?)

- **Risks*/Vulnerability:** Ignorance of risks may thwart sustainability. It is critical to be aware of potential risks to the sustainability OF the evaluand that threaten potential FOR long-term sustainability. What strategies are in place to thwart potential risks to successful continuation of relevant and successful components and dimensions of the evaluand?
    - Flexibility to changes in the environment
    - Cultural compatibility of activities
    - Risk to human sustainability: e.g., overpopulation and human development
    - Risks to social sustainability: e.g., violence and social breakdown
    - Risk to economic sustainability: e.g., crisis and shocks, balance of payments
    - Risk to environmental sustainability: e.g., climate change, natural disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis, etc.), over-consumption, waste, etc.
    - Risk to participants and program staff if the evaluand is or is not sustained

Detriment-Benefit Matrix (adapted from Davidson, 2005)		How detrimental would it be overall if the evaluand did very poorly on this dimension of sustainability?		
		Not noticeably detrimental	Somewhat detrimental	Highly detrimental
How beneficial would it be overall if the evaluand did very well on this dimension of sustainability?	Somewhat beneficial	Desirable*	Desirable*	Important**
	Very beneficial	Desirable*	Important**	Critical***
	Extremely beneficial	Important**	Critical***	Critical***

Section 5: Criteria of merit (quality)

What are the properties which define good sustainability without consideration of cost?

Process-oriented criteria: These criteria are especially useful in determining if the evaluand has the capacity for addressing sustainability needs (i.e., prospective considerations), but also to determine which of the evaluand's elements (e.g., activities) persist after initial resources for the evaluand have been removed (i.e., retrospective considerations) or supplemented with other resources.

- **Use of evidence from research, monitoring, and evaluation**
    - Not everything should be sustained
    - Not everything was planned to be sustained
    - Factors, activities or outcomes to be sustained were found to be adequate to allow for the continuation of the evaluand

- Findings from monitoring and evaluation are used proactively for continuous improvement of the evaluation object
- There is evidence that factors that have shown to be detrimental or insufficient have been discontinued or have been improved

- **Appreciation of knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies**
  - Traditional/classical knowledge
  - Intra- and intergenerational knowledge
  - Knowledge management
  - Accessibility to knowledge: Awareness of international values and policies in the international community (Millennium Development Goals, the United Nation's Development Assistance Framework, and Agenda 21)

- **Leadership competencies**
  - Championing: Capacity to promote sustainability, while preventing or mitigating negative impacts.
  - Strategic plans for sustainability are frequently revised to adjust for changes in context. Activities and goals are aligned with sustainability needs of consumers and impactees (see criteria of significance)
  - Strong political commitment and external support are obtained
  - Consensus and long-term vision about objectives
  - Shared strategic and pragmatic vision
  - Realistic and flexible targets
  - Succession planning
  - Commitment to sustainable development
  - Balance between bureaucratic efficiency and democratic involvement (i.e., effective participation)

- **Organizational characteristics (replicability of sustainable actions and/or impacts)**
  - Relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities of those involved
  - Diversified funding streams
  - Diversified activities
  - Participation, involvement, and integration at all levels
  - Equity
  - Institutionalization efforts are in place
  - Continuous monitoring of progress toward sustainability
  - Legal basis of the organization

- **Infrastructure:** Reach, condition, and match of infrastructure in relation to program/project goals.
    - Adequacy of technology (e.g., communications, mobility)
    - Accessibility of people to be reached (e.g., roads, vehicles)
    - Stable electricity, if needed
    - Adequate waste treatment
    - Adequate facilities for activities, program support, etc.

- **Collaboration/Involvement**
    - Inclusion of relevant stakeholders and impactees
    - Clear communication/transparency (e.g., sharing vision, sharing findings from evaluations)
    - Linkages to other organizations/partners
    - Communication patterns among participants on the local, national, and international level of the evaluand and respective knowledge transfer (systemic support mechanisms)
    - Collective responsibility and accountability

- **Understanding the community and its environmental context: Is there a conducive environment for sustainability?**
    - Respect (sensitivity) for the community's tolerance for change (e.g., cultural relevance, respect of indigenous knowledge and practice; enablers and inhibitors to sustainability)
    - Acceptability across impactees (i.e., consider impacts on men/women, young/old, healthy/sick)
    - Politics and power relationships
    - Appropriateness of policy frameworks (e.g., people-centered, right-based, community-driven development model).
    - Alignment of intervention with local, national and/or international policies and priorities
    - Alignment of intervention with legal requirements: What federal, national, or state laws and regulations are relevant across program boundaries? How could these laws/regulations affect sustainability?
    - Recognition and preservation of diversity
    - Community linkages (social capital: willingness to share knowledge and information, help in handling everyday matters, and reinforcing social networks, solidarity)
    - Appropriateness of technology (e.g., simplicity, affordability, adequacy, mobility, etc.)

- **Responsiveness**
    - Awareness of current and emergent needs
    - Ability in addressing emergent needs within the realm of the organization's mission and priorities
    - Ability to adjust to changing contexts
    - Ability to adjust for unanticipated negative impacts and side effects (e.g., environmental degradation)
    - Substitution of resources in contrast to usage of nonrenewable resources
    - Continuous adaptation of intervention to maximize benefits and minimize harm
    - Concern of potential harms of an intervention to future generations (intergenerational equity; inclusion of children and youth specifically)
    - Integrated renewal mechanisms

Outcome-oriented criteria: These criteria might be especially useful in determining if the evaluand has the capacity for sustainability (i.e., prospective considerations) or which outcomes have been sustained to date (i.e., retrospective considerations). Remember that not everything should be sustained.

- **Goal orientation (key issues in sustainable development):**
    - Was the evaluand intended to be sustained?
    - Was the evaluand implemented as designed?
    - Consideration of the whole system and its parts: linkages between interventions and outcomes
    - Consideration of human, social, economic, and environmental sub-systems (holistic science and appropriate technology)
        - Human subsystems: consider for example developing full human potential; cultural, moral and spiritual sensitivity; self-determination; population growth
        - Social subsystems: consider for example gender sensitivity; social justice; tribal ecological knowledge
        - Economic subsystems: consider for example institutional viability; viable, sound and broad-based economic
        - Environmental subsystem: consider ecological soundness

- **Positive and negative impacts of the evaluand over time:**
  - Human dimension: consider for example health, education, poverty reduction; availability and quality of food
  - Social dimension: consider for example politics, local partnerships, gender, age, equity; ethics; cultural beliefs, language, values; indigenous rights; community cohesion, stability, character, services, and social institutions; politics; impacts on tribal ecological knowledge
  - Economic dimension: consider for example access to and control over resources; infrastructure, institutions, tourism
  - Environmental dimension: consider for example aesthetics (landscape analysis); archaeology and heritage; quality of air and water and watershed; level of exposure to risk, hazard, noise, dust; the local ecological condition on which life depends
  - Cross-dimensional impacts: consider for example intergenerational and intra-generational equity (gender, age, race/ethnicity, etc.); empowerment via social mobilization, direct action, power or protest-based confrontation, economic and social production approaches, civic engagement, raising consciousness, building capacity by providing knowledge, skills, and positive experience/success; usefulness of outcomes to community; the precautionary principle

Section 6: Criteria of worth (value)

Is the continuation of the evaluand or its outcomes worth the costs that accrue now and in the future?

Available cost evaluation checklists provide guidelines for identifying and analyzing costs and benefits that can be useful in many evaluations. In evaluation of sustainability, however, the consideration of cost must not only reflect on benefits and costs but also entail current and future generations. Benefits from an intervention should outweigh costs to human and the environment.

- **Time at which costs/resources are accrued**
  - During the general program life cycle: What monies and resources are, were, and could have been used during the program life cycle?
    - This information should be available from previous evaluations, monitoring activities, or program documentation based on which the sustainability evaluation has been deemed worth doing
    - Consider adequacy of financial, human, material, and other resources. This will impact the scale and scope of the evaluand

- After the termination of startup funding: what monies and resources are, were, and could have used to continue elements of the evaluand? These monies and resources show the capability of the evaluand to continue
- Time of future generations (e.g., 20 years later): what monies and resources are needed to continue important elements of the evaluand in the long run? These costs are those resources and capacities required for maintaining the evaluand and outcomes thereof over time

- **Stakeholders and impactees, to whom monetary and nonmonetary costs accrue (check your list of consumers and impactees developed earlier to make sure that you do not forget anyone or any group of people or organization that is of importance here)**
  - Costs that accrue for those people involved in the programming. These costs includes payments/salaries, time, resources, but also personal costs (e.g., stress, time away from the family, etc.)
  - Costs that accrue for those people that are impacted by the programming. These include intra-generational and intergenerational impactees and upstream stakeholders as well as alternative impactees.

- **Facets of cost (generally, monetary and nonmonetary are distinguished here):**
  - Actual costs to humans (monetary and nonmonetary costs that accrue to individuals)
  - Actual costs to society (monetary and nonmonetary costs that accrue to groups of people, organizations, communities, etc)
  - Opportunity costs*****: the cost of not considering alternatives at each of the previously stated levels

- **Specific costs or resource use to consider include:**
  - Human resources
  - Renewable and nonrenewable resources
  - Tools and technologies used
  - Infrastructure
  - Recycling, waste management, and conservation
  - The benefits from the evaluand are equal to or larger than the costs accrued

- **Resource renewal**
  - Diversification of funding
  - Maximization of assets

Glossary of Checklist Terms

A	Activity/activities	Actions that are assumed by an evaluation object to achieve goals (see Frechtling, 2007)
	Analytic evaluation	Components, dimensions, and/or the underlying theory of the evaluand are considered separately prior to synthesizing these 'subevaluations' into conclusions about the whole evaluand (see Davidson, 2005a)
	Apportioning	Allocation or distribution: Dividing a given, often finite, quantity of valued resources between competing demands
	Ascriptive evaluation	Evaluation for the purpose of knowledge gain (for the sake of it)
	Audience	Users of the evaluation; those who should receive reports, presentations, workshops, debriefings, etc
B	Bar	Minimum acceptable standard; an evaluative operation where minimum levels of performance are set, or required, on specific dimensions or components, performance below which cannot be compensated for by better performance on other dimensions. Failure to 'clear' a bar means 'failure' of the evaluand
	Behavior-oriented sustainability	The target group or project holder has problem-solving capacities to adequately and flexibly adapt to changing environmental conditions (after Stockmann in Caspari, 2004, pp. 67-68)
	Benefit	Positive outcome or impact
	Bottom-up evaluation	The evaluation is initiated on the grassroots level
C	Checklist	A tool to plan and design evaluation
	Component evaluation	Each part of the evaluation object (e.g., inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes) is evaluated separately. The resulting subevaluations are then integrated into overall conclusions about the evaluand (see Davidson, 2005a).
	Criteria	Properties that are part of the concept of a "good X;" they are definitionally connected with the evaluand (see Scriven, 2007)
D	DAC-Criteria	Principles for evaluations of development interventions (OECD, 2007)

	Dimensional evaluation	Merit, worth, and significance are considered for facets that permeate the whole evaluand; in sustainability evaluation, these facets include human, social, economic, and environmental dimensions
E	Economic dimension of sustainability	Financial stability: keeping capital intact; concerns economic needs, infrastructure, distribution of wealth, control over resources, overconsumption, etc. (cf., Goodland, 2002)
	Environmental dimension of sustainability	Protecting natural capitals (e.g., water, land, air, minerals, etc.); Concerns ecological needs, pollution, climate change, waste management, green energy, etc. (cf., Goodland, 2002)
	Evaluand	Something that is being evaluated, object under evaluation (e.g., products, policies, programs)
	Evaluation	The systematic process of determining the merit (quality), worth (value), and/or significance (importance) of evaluands (e.g., programs, policies, and products) or evaluees (e.g., personnel), or the product thereof. Professional evaluation involves the use of systematic investigation to collect and synthesize factual information (what so?) to render evaluative conclusions (so what?) about an evaluand's goodness, value, and importance.
	Evolutionary sustainability	A model assuming that sustainability relies on an interplay between forecasting, retaining, and adapting organizational processes (cf., Kraft & O'Neill, 2007)
	External evaluation	Evaluation conducted from outside an organization or program; the evaluator is not on the pay role of the organization that designed or implemented the program (see Davidson, 2005a)
F	Formative evaluation	Improvement-oriented determination of merit, worth, and/or significance with the intent to inform decision making about the state of an evaluand's/evaluee's (e.g., program, policy, personnel) components or dimensions. This type of evaluation supports decision making about which program components or staff member competencies require improvement.
G	Global bar	Involves setting or requiring minimum levels of combined or aggregated performance across all dimensions or components, normally using numeric indices (see Coryn, 2006).
	Goal-free evaluation	The determination of merit, worth, and/or significance without explicit consideration of a program's stated goals or objectives. Goal-free evaluation considers what an evaluand is doing instead of what it intended to do. Needs assessments are central elements in goal-free evaluation.

	Grading	Assigning evaluands to an ordered set of categories, with the order corresponding to a metric of merit
H	Holistic bar	Involves a visual inspection (i.e., non-numeric) of performance across all dimensions or components, where performance across all must meet a minimum in order to 'pass' (see Coryn, 2006).
	Holistic evaluation	The whole evaluand is considered without separating parts
	Human dimension of sustainability	Maintaining/improving human capital such as health, education, knowledge, leadership, etc.; Concerns basic human needs such as food, shelter, health, etc. (cf., Goodland, 2002)
I	Impact	Intended, unintended, anticipated, and unanticipated effects on targeted and non-targeted populations; usually referring to long-term effects and outcomes (see Davidson, 2005a; Frechtling, 2007)
	Impactee	Everyone who experiences change due to the evaluand, including individuals who are directly affected by an intervention (i.e., downstream direct impactees) and individuals and organizations that are NOT involved in the evaluand and are NOT direct recipients of the evaluand, but are still impacted by the potential range of outcomes of the evaluand recipients (i.e., downstream indirect impactees), those directly involved in the program implementation (e.g., staff; i.e., mid-stream consumers), and funders, political supporters, etc. (i.e., upstream impactees), (see Scriven, 2006)
	Indicators	Factors, variables, or observations that provide evidence for the performance on a given criterion. Sustainability indicators must be specific (relate to the criterion), measurable (or observable), usable (practical), **s**ensitive (must readily change as circumstances change), available (data must be collectable); and cost-effective (see Bell and Morse, 2003)
	Input	Material, non-material, monetary, and non-monetary resources of an evaluation object
	Internal evaluation	Evaluation conducted from within an organization or program; includes self-evaluation and evaluation by peer from different programs or units within the same organization (see Caspari, 2004, p. 32); the evaluator is on the pay role of the organization that designed or implemented the program (see Davidson, 2005a)
M	Merit	Intrinsic quality; quality without consideration of cost

	Metaevaluation	Formative or summative evaluation of evaluation processes and products. Standards against which evaluations can be assessed include, for example, the Joint Committee Standards for Program Evaluation, the American Evaluation Associations Guiding Principles for Program Evaluators, and the U.S. Government Accountability Office's Government Auditing Standards (Yellow Book).
	Mnemonic device	Memory aid
N	Needs assessment	A systematic approach for determining states of existence or levels of performance of people, programs, or organizations. The purpose is to set priorities, allocate resources, and/or determine evaluative criteria. In contrast to wants or ideals, needs are essential for people, programs, or organizations to exist and perform reasonably in a given context. When conducting needs assessments, it is important to consider (un)met and (un)conscious needs as well as performance and treatment needs.
O	Omission	Oversight, exclusion (Scriven, 1991; 2007)
	Opportunity cost	Activities or services that could have been implemented if resources had been allocated differently; forgone alternatives (Davidson, 2005a; Mathison, 2005)
	Outcome	Usually intended, but also unintended change occurring as a consequence of the evaluand's activities, progress toward goals (Frechtling, 2007; Davidson, 2005a)
	Output	Tangible, immediate results that are evidence for the implementation of an activity or service (Mathison, 2005; Frechtling, 2007)
P	Performance	A factor determining overall productivity or functionality of an evaluand or evaluee
	Performance standards	Performance standards are specific values applied to the general criteria. They clarify what comprises different degrees of 'good,' 'valuable,' and/or 'important'
	Policy	Written plans that are informed by evidence, change focused, inclusive, strategic, causal, realistic, flexible, and outcome oriented (see Owen, 2006, p. 26) with the intend to guide decision making and action in specified contexts (see Davidson, 205, p. 244). Policies can exist on local, national, and international levels.

	Process	That what is being implemented within the realm of a program, including consideration of inputs, activities, services, and outputs
	Product	A concrete result of a performance, task, production, or other process including outputs, outcomes, and impacts
	Profiling	To graphically exhibiting grades, not scores, on the relevant dimensions of merit, worth, and/or significance
	Program	A set of planned activities or services intended to address a need or other goals for a specified target group (see Davidson, 2005a; Owen, 2006)
	Project	See program; usually a small scale program that is more refined in terms of time and scope.
	Project-oriented sustainability	The target group or project holder continues the evaluand in its own interest for its own purposes over time (after Stockmann in Caspari, 2004, p. 67)
	Proposal	A written plan/offer that specifies a program or an evaluation, associated prices, terms and conditions, products, goals, etc.
	Purpose/use-oriented sustainability	Other groups or project holders adapt the evaluand for their interests, purposes, and uses (after Stockmann in Caspari, 2004, p. 67)
R	Ranking	An operation used to place evaluands or evaluees in an order of merit (worth or significance) on the basis of their relative performance on a measurement or observation.
	Reach	The breath of impacts resulting from an evaluation object geographically and over time
	Risk	Factors that affect or are likely to affect success of an intervention; also negative consequences of an intervention to human life, health, property, or the environment
	Rubric	Description of the meaning of a level of performance (e.g., inadequately, adequately, or exceptionally; scales can vary)
S	Scaling	Refers to replicating, expanding, or increasing program efforts to extend positive outcomes and impacts
	Scoring	Involves assigning numeric quantities, usually in terms of performance, on which to represent merit
	Significance	Importance, relevance

	Social dimension of sustainability	Maintaining/improving social capital: cultural, language, shared rules, laws, etc.; concerns social needs, ways of organization, governance, and human interaction, etc. (cf., Goodland, 2002)
	Stakeholder	Those with a stake or some sort of investment in the evaluation object (see Davidson, 2005a; Frechtling, 2007)
	Summative evaluation	Accountability-oriented evaluation that seeks to determine the merit, worth, and/or significance of an evaluand in order to inform decision making about the evaluand. This type of evaluation aids decision making about whether to continue or terminate a program, or hire or fire a staff member.
	Sustainability	The capacity to exist (e.g., projects, programs, mankind) or continue (e.g., human, social, economic, and/or environmental benefits).
	Sustainable development	"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, p.43).
	Synthesis	The process of integrating a set of ratings or performances on several dimensions, components, or criteria into an evaluative conclusion
	Systems-oriented sustainability	The evaluand is being implemented system-wide to enhance performance across the system (e.g., educational or health systems); (after Stockmann in Caspari, 2004, pp. 67-77)
T	Theory of an evaluand	Generally refers to the logic or guiding framework for a program; a set of assumptions about how a program works; also referred to as logframe, logic model, theory of change (see Frechtling, 2007)
	Top-down evaluation	An elite group (e.g., the funder) is requesting the evaluation.
V	Value(s)	Prescriptive or subjective assumptions about goodness, worth, and importance. They clarify what constitutes good/mediocre/bad; worthwhile/worthless, and or important or unimportant. Remember, there are usually levels of degree. However, it is essential to clarify upfront what is or is not acceptable in a given situation.
W	Weighting	Assigning levels of importance to components or dimensions of an evaluand or evaluee to indicate their relative or absolute importance
	Worth	Material and in-material value; specifically considers monetary and non-monetary costs

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