

Chapter 4

Making Use of Prior Assessment Results

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What difference a prior assessment can really make depends on various issues. At best it can bring about a better tailored and more coherent local development strategy, increase collective understanding about the means to attain goals and mobilise actors into contributing to the achievement of the goals. If it is not used properly, however, it might be a symbolic act with not much visible impact on how the local development policy evolves.

To ensure that the prior assessment of evidence leads to real improvements, it is critical that the results are used. This chapter examines how to do this, addressing how:

- The commitment of various stakeholders to prior assessment is an important prerequisite for success.
- The use of evaluation takes place in social interaction between various actors.
- The prior assessment exercise should aim to be a vehicle for collective learning.
- Involvement in the assessment process will have some impact on the thinking and behaviour of the people concerned, especially if participatory methods are used.
- How the results feed into the strategy process and other policy-making processes is of crucial importance.

Introduction

Making use of the results is the final step in an assessment process. It is easily thought to fall outside the evaluation process itself. Yet it is a crucial and integral part of the whole assessment process, since only if the results prove to be useful can an evaluation process be justified.

The perspective of use also provides us with a simple rule of thumb for deciding whether an evaluation is needed in the first place: the benefits of assessment should exceed its costs. Although this might not be easily calculated in advance, it certainly obliges one to think about the ways results should be used, by whom and when.

Making use of evaluation is seldom an automatic process. There exists ample evidence that evaluation studies are not always being utilised to a great extent, and that sometimes they are even simply ignored. This reminds us that one needs to pay attention to the issue of utilisation throughout the assessment process and plan the intended uses at the outset.

Prior assessments can be used in various ways:

- Conscious and **instrumental** use of results in revising the local development strategy following the conclusions and suggested policy recommendations.
- More **conceptual** use of results in gaining novel ideas, new perspectives and frameworks, or more nuanced understandings about the dynamics of local development.
- Using the evaluation process as an agent for **learning and change** among the stakeholders.

It is not only the results in the prior assessment or ex ante evaluation report that are being used. In fact, it is more likely to be the **assessment process** as a whole which generates the most profound impacts on actors' thinking and behaviour. The very process of carrying out an assessment is likely to influence the way a local development strategy will be adopted and deployed. It should also be remembered that it is people, not organisations, who use evaluation results. Therefore people who have an interest in the local development strategy and its outcomes are obvious candidates as potential evaluation users.

How can assessment results be used?

The ultimate goal of evaluation is to learn about local development strategies and the means of attaining strategic objectives. An ambitious

evaluation scheme should aim explicitly at generating learning at individual, organisational and local levels.

Learning about a local development strategy can take several forms:

- Learning about strategic **policy goals**; what kind of development targets are worth pursuing on a local level.
- Learning about **policy instruments**; what works and in which context; which development approaches and tools can be used to attain the goals.
- Learning about the **strategy process**; how to prepare, design, manage and implement a local development process; how to commit various actors to it; how to communicate the expected benefits from engaging in the strategy formulation and implementation.

Learning is thus the ultimate target of evaluation. Evaluation can contribute to learning in the local development process basically through two functions: it can provide analytical evidence and arguments to strategy-making practitioners; and it can provide a process for interaction and reasoned debate between various actors.

Providing sound and credible arguments for policy making

First, the purpose of evaluation is to provide sound and credible evidence and arguments for a decision-making process. In some cases evaluation may bring up new information about the state of local development which affects the strategy choices. In other cases it may provide an alternative means of looking at the strategic options available and suggest a new path forward. Both evidence and the conclusions derived from it may be potentially useful for the local development strategy process. Prior assessment can:

- Clarify the rationale of the strategic objectives in terms of socio-economic development needs of the local community or the region.
- Sharpen the prioritisation of strategic goals, which often remain painfully vague and generic.
- Critically examine the relationships between policy measures, their outputs and expected outcomes.
- Impose more coherent logic on the development strategy (*i.e.* the “logic model” or “intervention logic” of the local development strategy).
- Assess the feasibility of the strategy in terms of its implementation plan.
- Provide a final “check point” before approving the action plan, thus making the justification for the planned expenditures firmer.

- Prior assessment can also function as “a critical voice”. If legitimate rationale for interventions cannot be provided by evidence and analysis, a prior assessment should be able to suggest fundamental changes in the strategy. Or even more radically, refraining from taking action can be recommended if the case for intervention is not strong enough.

It needs to be recognised that evaluation does not bear automatic supremacy over other forms of policy-relevant information. Decision makers will always use their professional experience, common sense, intuition and tacit knowledge to form their opinion regarding the choices ahead of them. Various sources of information and deliberation will always play a great role.

Nevertheless, the results of a well-crafted prior assessment may offer more evidence-based analytical arguments than many other sources of information. In this respect, they are not just another source of information, but may provide balanced judgments on the basis of careful analysis of empirical data. One should not, however, assume too optimistically that evaluation will become the principal basis of decisions. Evaluators do not have a monopoly on knowledge. Evaluation is only one informational input among others in circulation, competing for attention.

Providing a process for interaction

A prior assessment should be seen as an elementary part of the local development strategy process. This is because it offers various **process benefits**. Even before the results of the analysis are finalised, the assessment process itself can already bring about many changes. It can:

- Build momentum, allowing managers and stakeholders to **reflect critically** on the strategic choices and presumptions about the dynamics of local development.
- Enhance understanding of the **drivers** of local economic development, such as innovation, learning, the adoption of new technology and entrepreneurship.
- Increase more informed understanding of the relations between activities, outputs and outcomes through an analysis of the strategy’s **logic of interventions**. In real life, objectives and activities often get blurred. Carrying out single projects might become an end in itself, replacing the local economic and social development objectives the project was intended to serve. By linking planned activities explicitly to intended outcomes, prior assessment might help the local development strategy to stay tuned to serve the real development needs and problems.

- Strengthen **commitment** among the local decision makers and stakeholders. Simply being involved in the evaluation process and having the opportunity to express one's views to an evaluator might make people more engaged with the strategy process.

Process does matter. The use of a prior assessment, to a large extent, is relevant throughout the evaluation process, not only when the results are reported. Whether the assessment process can make a difference to the strategic choices depends largely on the measure of **interaction** between the evaluators and the stakeholders in the evaluation process. Participatory methods, which are widely used in assessing local development strategies, are powerful tools for reaping the full benefits of a prior assessment process. See Box 4.1, which illustrates the benefits of this process in Finland.

Utilisation of assessment results is not only about change in individual people's thinking and action. More importantly, it takes place in **social interaction** between various stakeholders – politicians, local government, business community, science and education institutions, voluntary organisations, media and citizens. How these actors individually and collectively react to evaluation results will determine its use. That is to say:

- How stakeholders interpret the meaning of prior assessment results; how the conclusions and recommendations fit with various actors' conceptions, ideas, expectations, objectives, interests, values and world views.
- How they discuss relevance and validity of the results in their respective organisations and various inter-organisational forums.
- How they negotiate the implications of an assessment of the strategic goal setting and its operationalisation into an action plan.
- What kind of decisions they will subsequently make to revise or modify the local development strategy and its action plan.
- How they will take the assessment results into account in their respective organisations during the strategy implementation phase.

The success of a local development strategy is largely determined by the commitment of various local actors to it. And this commitment will be created by repeated discussions and negotiations between the relevant parties. Consequently, a prior assessment will stand little chance of having significant influence on the strategy process if its results do not become a subject of discussion between the actors involved with the strategy.

Box 4.1. Using a collaborative prior assessment method to promote learning in the Regional Centre Development Programme in Finland

In the prior assessment of a development initiative in Finland, the local development strategies were studied with the help of a collaborative working method. The Regional Centre Development Programme builds on the idea of activating networking and co-operation between local and regional actors within local urban employment areas. The ultimate goal is to improve the competitiveness of the area by more deliberate strategic choices and commitment to commonly agreed objectives. The programme philosophy stresses the importance of local priority setting in the regions instead of top-down steering by national policy guidelines.

A significant element of the prior assessment exercise consisted of a series of evaluation workshops conducted in a participatory manner with local actors and stakeholders. The principal goal of these sessions was to clarify the logic behind the local development strategies. With the help of computer-assisted mapping of the strategy elements, the evaluation team aimed to make explicit the hidden assumptions about how intended outcomes are supposed to be attained. The purpose of this exercise was to achieve better understanding of the nature of the development strategies. The assessment of the strategies was designed to critically investigate the logical coherence and plausibility of the plan. It was also designed to build a foundation for intermediate and *ex post* evaluation in the later stages.

One of the tangible outputs of these collaborative sessions with local actors was visual illustrations – “strategy maps” as they were entitled by the evaluation team – which described the logic of the strategies through graphic presentations. In these exhibits, general level strategic goals and priorities, more specific objectives and practical measures were interlinked to form roadmaps for the local development strategies. These maps were combined with more detailed logical framework analysis including preliminary indicators and sources of monitoring data.

In light of the feedback collected from the participants, the interactive construction of the programme models provided an opportunity for learning about the strategies:

- The participants credited the workshops with helping them to obtain a more holistic and coherent picture of various actors’ thinking.
- The goals and objectives of the local development strategies were discussed, modified and fine-tuned during the workshops. The mapping process clarified various levels of goals and revealed some inconsistencies, thus giving the participants a more structured model of the strategies.
- The mapping process also revealed discrepancies between the ultimate strategic objectives and the measures chosen for attaining the goals.
- The assessment process contributed in establishing indicators for monitoring the strategy.

The prior assessment thus contributed to creating shared understanding between operative actors about the local development initiative. Without a shared understanding of the programme’s working model, it has limited chances of generating clear impacts. For a local development strategy to succeed, it will necessarily require the commitment of a multitude of actors. Therefore, a shared understanding about the nature of the programme is a necessary prerequisite for a local development strategy to have a significant influence.

Identifying the users

How can one ensure that a prior assessment of a local development strategy is given a chance to contribute positively to the strategy process and become utilised? The first step is to identify the potential users. This is needed because a local development strategy will most often be deployed by a network of several actors rather than a single local agency alone. Even if the strategy is intended to be implemented mainly by one single organisation, the complex dynamics of local development necessitates close interaction between various local actors in order to generate significant changes in local economic and social conditions.

Different types of actors have varying interests in the strategy process. Therefore it is useful to distinguish the main groups that are involved in a local development process.

Operative actors are those who possess resources (financial, human or intangible resources) to turn the strategy into action. These include regional and local authorities, education and research institutions, private companies and business associations, local civic associations, and various types of intermediary organisations such as technology transfer organisations. Since all these actors are likely to have differing expectations towards the local development strategy, their interest towards prior assessment is likely to vary accordingly.

Elected policy makers are those who are mandated to use representative democratic power to make decisions on local development. Their interest is often at a more general level than that of operative actors. However, their approval and commitment is often required for major changes to occur.

Finally, **citizens** also have a potential stake in evaluation as final beneficiaries of a successful local development strategy. They use their right to vote in regional or local elections and referendums (this naturally varies significantly between countries). Through democratic procedures they impose political accountability upon elected representatives.

All these groups of stakeholders are potentially interested in the results of prior assessments of local development strategies. Their interests vary, however. More general conclusions need to be communicated to elected policy makers and citizens, whereas the operative actors are more likely to focus on the more operative and technical matters related to implementing the strategy.

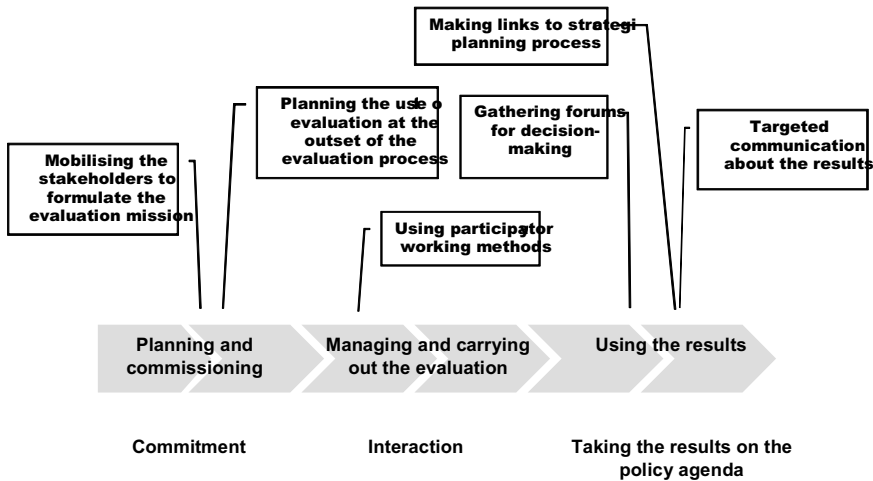
What can strategy managers do to increase the use of results?

There are several ways to improve the likelihood that a prior assessment will be useful for various actors. The organisers and managers of local development processes need to pay attention to the timing of the assessment, the means of communication and the means of managing complex networks of actors involved in the local strategy-making processes (Figure 4.1). More specifically:

- **Planning the expected use** at the outset of the evaluation process is one way to align the evaluation with its potential users' needs. One should anticipate the different ways that various stakeholders might use the results.
- **Timing** of the prior assessment is often also critical. The main results of the analysis need to be available when the major decisions are made. This does not mean, however, that a complete finished report need be provided to decision makers at the time of the decisions. Since schedules are often tight, it might be more realistic to require that the main findings and conclusions from the assessment will be formulated in a summarised form for decision-making purposes, and the complete report may be delivered later.
- **Targeted communication** to identified users is another means to increase utilisation. This should take place in several phases of the process. First, stakeholders should be informed about the evaluation study, its objectives and the schedule of when stakeholders will be expected to be engaged with the assessment process. Secondly, the stakeholders should be informed about how and when the results will be presented, and the implications for the development strategy.
- **Incorporating** assessment results into the strategy agenda is a natural step towards the utilisation of evaluation results. Too often all major decisions have already been made before the assessment results are available. This will leave evaluation with a largely symbolic and ritualistic role, with the possibility of achieving only minor modifications in the strategy.
- Mobilising **political support** from local policy makers is often necessary to ensure that evaluation has a chance to affect policy making. Politicians need to be informed about the process.
- An effective way to give evaluation more leverage is to engage a local **champion** – an influential local professional – in the evaluation process and in the use of the results in local policy making.

- Seeing evaluation as in part a **network management** tool might also help place it more effectively in a local development strategy process. Evaluation can be seen as one tool to provide increased “strategic policy intelligence” which could function as a platform for informed debate between various actors.

Figure 4.1. **What can strategy managers do to increase the use of results?**



Promotion of discussion about evaluation results can take place at various levels. Strategy managers may actively promote the discussion on evaluation results:

- By putting them high up on the agenda of the strategy process.
- By inviting evaluators to present their findings in strategy workshops and allocating sufficient time for discussion.
- In some cases, it might be relevant even to promote discussion about the local development strategy process among local media to raise public debate about the goals and options.

It is not always easy to embed the evaluation process neatly in the evolving dynamics of a local development strategy process. Social scientists have discovered that the best window of opportunity for **policy change** is present when three interrelated processes converge: discussion about policy problems, agenda setting for solutions to these problems, and decision making at the political level. The local development strategy tries to channel these streams together into a coherent plan for change on a local level. Yet it might happen that the three processes evolve under diverging timeframes.

Thus the momentum for major changes to occur is not always automatically available, and needs to be created. To have a real impact on the policy, the main conclusions of evaluation should be brought up when the window for policy change is open.

What can evaluators do to increase the use of results?

There are several issues affecting the potential utility of evaluation which are determined by the choices made by evaluators. What methods are used, how results are communicated and how the evaluation process is interacting with the local development strategy process will affect the usability of an assessment.

The first and most obvious factor is the professional capacity of the evaluator to conduct a rigorous analysis which enjoys **sound and valid** credibility. Presenting sound argumentation where conclusions and recommendations are derived from robust data is a bottom line for making the assessment useful. A loose collection of fragmented evidence, presented in an impressionistic style, will easily be regarded as just another source of expert opinion. Results with strong backing in empirical data and methodological integrity in analysis, in contrast, are more likely to be taken into consideration and given due attention. However, the validity of the analysis in scientific standards does not merely suffice to make an assessment useful. The social, political and organisational usability of evaluation results will be to a large degree dictated by the dynamics of social interaction where evidence and arguments from assessment can be used for social purposes. This links back to the question of **relevance** – how does the prior assessment mission reflect stakeholders' needs and the specificities of the strategy process?

Evaluators can make their study more relevant to different actors by **negotiating the evaluation mission** carefully with the commissioners and stakeholders of the study with regards to their expectations and information needs. One of the common pitfalls an evaluator can make is not to clarify the programme managers' expectations about what can be learned from the evaluation.

An even more powerful way of providing potential benefits is to **involve local actors** in the assessment process. Local actors can be involved in several ways:

- Participation in **data collection** through face-to-face interviews and focus group interviews will provide them with opportunities to reflect on their expectations and offer a channel to feed their ideas into the strategy process.

- Collaborative working methods can also be used in the **analysis phase**. One may arrange expert panel meetings in which the implications of the prior assessment findings can be collectively interpreted and discussed. This may reveal unnoticed relations between issues or give insights into various types of constraints – be they political, financial, organisational, or cultural – which require closer attention.
- In the **reporting phase** the preliminary findings and conclusions can be submitted to key stakeholders for reality testing. Normally this takes the form of a draft report. But checking against the practitioners’ experience may also take the form of an interactive “validation workshop”, where additional policy relevance can be added by reasoned but critical debate on the possible strategic futures.

What evaluation users often value the most is a **new perspective** to look at the local development strategy. Those conducting prior assessments of local development strategies might need to find novel perspectives to look at the issues in order to bring further added value. A framework which establishes coherent and logical dependencies between various phenomena is often more useful than an analysis carried out strictly in line with regular ways of looking at local economic and social development.

Internal and external evaluators

Guidebooks on evaluation methods typically assume that evaluators operate as external experts in relation to the target being evaluated. The external status is generally assumed to permit a more independent, objective and credible position. Despite obvious benefits associated with the external status, it might in some cases be more reasonable to use an in-house evaluator, because:

- Using internal staff resources might be less costly than use of external experts (although this might be only an illusion created by fixed personnel costs).
- New knowledge produced by evaluation will stay inside the organisation and it might be better tapped into on later occasions, enabling organisational learning over time.
- An internal evaluator might be better equipped to act as an agent for change and a champion of evaluation use than external consultants or academics.

Also, various types of combinations of internal and external evaluators are possible. An evaluation design can be created where internal staff manage the process, collect core data and arrange interviews, workshops and

seminars. Sometimes even preliminary analysis can be run by internal staff. The expertise of the external experts focuses on consulting on the design of the evaluation process, undertaking analysis and interpretation of the collected data, drawing key conclusions and reporting the results. The neutral status of an external evaluator may enhance the credibility of the results compared with a mere in-house assessment. Many of the aforementioned benefits of an in-house assessment can be accrued with a hybrid design. However, a risk remains that the assessment of the external experts remains superficial and dependent on the data provided.

It should be also noted that external experts may not always be neutral and independent *vis-à-vis* the local development strategy. Local universities, for instance, often have a strong interest in the local strategies. They are key stakeholders, carrying out research and development projects and education programmes, the financing of which may be subject to the local development strategy. As regards the role of the evaluator, discussion should not only concern formal contracting relationships between evaluator and the commissioner, but rather whether the evaluator has a “stake” in the local development strategy as one of the local partners or not.

Reporting evaluation results

There are many ways to increase the usability of evaluation by reporting and communicating the results effectively. Making an assessment is not only about producing a piece of policy analysis. It is also, to a great extent, a matter of communicating information and policy recommendations in effective ways. Some of the most significant factors in effective communication of the results of a prior assessment include the following:

- Use language which resonates well with the intended users’ way of thinking and speaking. Avoiding technical jargon and specialist terminology will improve the likelihood that evaluation results have an influence.
- Present the results as complete arguments which logically interlink conclusions and recommendations with evidence and analysis.
- Illustrate the analysis with figures, charts, tables, and sometimes even pictures – it will make the report more informative and interesting.
- Use case examples from other regions or countries. Comparisons often represent more compelling knowledge to policy makers than a very detailed statistical analysis of one single local context without a point of reference. The power of examples, analogies and benchmarks should not be underestimated.

Targeting recommendations to separate audiences can also increase the likelihood that the outcomes of a prior assessment will be given due attention. Conclusions and policy recommendations can be differentiated to various stakeholder groups to match their level of interests:

- Strategic-level policy implications regarding the relevance of general goals and strategic choices should be mostly targeted at local policy makers.
- Questions concerning the feasibility of the plan should be the primary concern of operative actors.
- Questions about the strategy process itself are of interest to those responsible for designing and managing the strategy process.

It is often advisable to leave some room for the decision makers to do their job – that is to make decisions – by giving them a number of options rather than insisting on only one preferred strategy (Box 4.2 and Box 4.3).

Box 4.2. Proposing several strategic options might be better than a single recommendation

Policy makers can be forced to think in a more articulated way on their strategic choices if there are several options which link alternative goal settings with alternative actions. In the case of a local employment strategy, an evaluator might give several optional strategic recommendations, like the following:

1. If the main goal is to integrate young unemployed people into job markets through training and matching them more effectively with local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), then “X” should be the preferred line of action.
2. If the ultimate target is to redirect local labour supply to better match the needs of local SMEs suffering from labour shortages, then the preferred strategy should be based on “Y” rather than “X”.
3. If however, a more efficient balance between the two previous goals is being sought, you should choose “Z” which is also a combination of “X” and “Y”.

It is commonplace that strategic goals remain vague. They need to be clarified by asking the policy makers for more detailed direction. However, it should be remembered that goals do not always get articulated first. Sometimes it is the means which have been decided first – and relevant problems are then identified to match them.

Nevertheless, giving several options should not be performed as an escape from valid analysis and sound argumentation. It is a way to leave room for policy makers to make reasoned choices between articulated options rather than restrict their room for manoeuvre.

In the complex political, economic and social context in which local development strategies are being formulated, there are always multiple options potentially available. Informed choices on these options can be assisted by providing alternatives with analysis of their full implications along various relevant dimensions.

Box 4.3. Using scenarios to make proactive and anticipatory strategies

A sophisticated way of offering strategic options is to test the strategic options in relation to a small number of scenarios. Scenarios are more or less plausible states of affairs imagined in the future. They are not intended to be predictions of the future, but rather equally plausible states of affairs evolving under different conditions and development trajectories.

Elements of scenarios are typically collected from various sources such as foresight studies, research reports, expert hearings and the like. Once scenarios have been constructed, all the strategic options available are then studied in each scenario. Looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies *vis-à-vis* alternative future “worlds” might reveal factors which otherwise remained unnoticed. Putting the strategies in a “wind tunnel” of scenarios and testing their relevance can improve the analytic added value of prior assessment to decision makers. This can create more room for policy learning and prepare decision makers for better matching with alternative environments in the future.

Mobilising stakeholders to discuss evaluation results should be the main target of the utilisation process. In order to create discussion, the results of a prior assessment need to be supplied into the strategy process. This can be accomplished in the following ways:

- The most natural way to feed prior assessment results into the strategy process is to utilise **established co-operation processes and forums**. The local development strategy process should be designed to absorb new information and knowledge provided by the evaluation process.
- If existing forums are not available, special **evaluation results workshops** can be arranged. While being useful as such, they risk staying distant from the strategy making unless linked into the strategy process in a designed manner. It can sometimes be challenging to mobilise actors to attend meetings which have evaluation as the only item on the agenda.
- In some cases, the evaluator can play the role of a **facilitator** for joint discussion and decision making. This would naturally require that the evaluator possess facilitating skills. In the best case, it might create a bridge between the evaluation process and the local development strategy process.

- There are several **communication techniques** which may be used to promote the use of the results: slide presentations, long and short versions of the report, executive summaries, press releases, web communication material, etc.
- A separate **dissemination plan** can be made which specifies informational needs of various stakeholders and proper communication methods for reaching each respective group.

Where evaluation stops, the strategy process needs to continue. To make the link between these two is of utmost importance to making a useful assessment.

Cultural and ethical issues

There exists great cultural variation between nations with regard to how the role of an assessment is likely to be perceived by stakeholders of a local development strategy process:

- In some countries, it is widely accepted that external analyses are needed to provide feedback to development processes. People have learned about being assessed and they might have a genuine will to improve their policies and actions. An evaluation culture has evolved and been institutionalised into management practices. This facilitates embedding evaluation into a local development strategy process.
- In some countries with a legalistic tradition of public administration, evaluation might be conceived mainly as an activity of control. It can be associated with inspection and audit more than with learning and dialogue. In these contexts, more consideration needs to be given to clarifying the rationale behind the assessment and creating commitment to conducting it and using the results for improvement and learning.
- In countries with a long history under a communist regime, it might still not be culturally accepted that decisions made by local and regional policy makers will be debated and questioned by researchers or evaluation consultants. The transition towards a more reflexive culture in local administration might take a long time. Evaluation might contribute to changing the culture of administration towards transparency, collaboration and debate.

Evaluators need to adopt slightly different approaches in various environments. Cultural sensitivity and knowledge of the local context are virtues which help to cross the murky waters of local political tensions. However, one of the basic functions of evaluation is its role as an independent and external impulse to the local development process.

Therefore, too much sensitivity might make the whole effort meaningless if critical findings are being toned down. Clearly a balance needs to be found between “speaking truth to power” and maintaining cultural sensitivity.

Making Use of Results – Summary of Do’s and Don’ts

Do’s

- Find out what expectations various stakeholder groups have concerning a prior assessment study. Use their constructive potential for carrying out the mission.
- Weigh the potential costs of a professionally conducted evaluation study against its potential uses and make a judgment on whether the assessment will be justified from a cost-benefit perspective.
- Ensure that there is enough support from policy makers for carrying out and using the results of the analysis. If not, reconsider the added value from an assessment.
- Mobilise and involve stakeholders by formulating the evaluation mission and keep them informed about how the assessment process proceeds.
- Anticipate various forms of intended uses of the evaluation results at the outset of the process.
- Find an evaluator who carries credibility among the potential users.
- Plan the timing of the assessment to fit the local development strategy process in a way that the results will be available to be used in decision making.
- Encourage the use of participatory assessment methods, which will make it possible to reap the full benefits of the evaluation process itself.
- Write clear, concise and balanced reports where conclusions are justified with evidence and analysis.

Don’ts

- Don’t assume that evaluation results will be automatically used for decision making by the mere provision of information.
- Organise forums for decision making if these are not yet made available by the strategy process.
- Carry out targeted communication regarding the evaluation results to various stakeholder groups: elected policy makers, operative actors, social partners and citizens.
- Don’t rely only on a single written report; in addition, use face-to-face communication, customised presentations and executive summaries.
- If possible, try to make the evaluation report public and available for all interested parties to increase the transparency of the process and to promote utilisation of the results; make full use of Internet-based communication tools.

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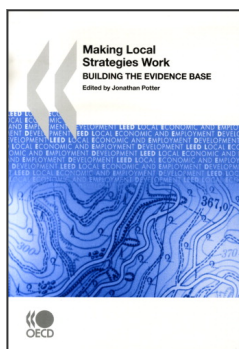
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From:
Making Local Strategies Work
Building the Evidence Base

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264044869-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

Valovirta, Ville (2008), "Making Use of Prior Assessment Results", in Jonathan Potter (ed.), *Making Local Strategies Work: Building the Evidence Base*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264044869-6-en>

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