

MONITORING YOUR PROGRESS

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Summary

This fact sheet is an overview of the monitoring and evaluation process. It outlines why you need to monitor and evaluate community plans, what is the purpose of monitoring and evaluation, who is involved and how it benefits your planning projects and helps you achieve your community's goals.

Keywords: community engagement, reporting back, collecting data, analyzing data, managing the process

What is Monitoring and Evaluation?

Monitoring and evaluation is a process that helps track and assess the implementation and results of your community's planning projects and decisions, by gathering data and information to evaluate their effectiveness.

Monitoring is the fourth stage in the planning cycle. This step is not the end of the process because planning is a continuous cycle. The results of your monitoring and evaluation will inform changes to your plan and how it will be implemented.

Monitoring is integral to evaluation. During an evaluation, information from previous monitoring processes is used to understand the ways in which the project or program developed and stimulated change.

Why Monitor and Evaluate Your Projects?

Some key reasons are to demonstrate the project's outputs or successes to the community and partners, and to provide data towards the overall understanding of the benefits of your project. It also allows for an **adaptive management approach** to current and future planning projects.

Adaptive Management Approach

The process of exploring alternate ways to meet the objectives based on your project's assessment and reporting.

Monitoring and evaluation plays a key role in the long-term success of planning. It can demonstrate what is going right, what is going wrong, and what needs to be improved. It can also demonstrate your past successful projects and encourage confidence in the planning team's ability to deliver future successful projects.

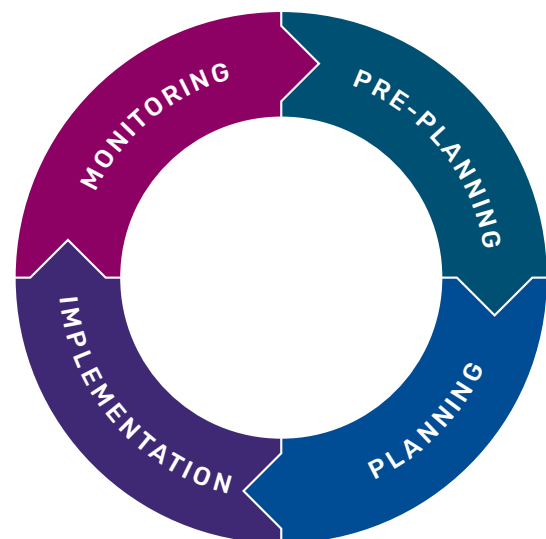


Figure 1 | The planning cycle.

Adapted from (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada / Indigenous Services Canada. "CCP Handbook: Comprehensive Community Planning for First Nations in British Columbia, Third Edition." 2013. Accessed November 17, 2019, http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-BC/STAGING/texte-text/ccphb2013_1378922610124_eng.pdf, p. 14.) Used with permission.

Monitoring

A periodically recurring process that begins during the planning stage of a project or program. Monitoring allows results, procedures and experiences to be documented and used as a basis to guide decision-making and processes. Monitoring checks the progress against plans. The information learned through monitoring is used for evaluation.¹

Evaluation

A process that assesses, as objectively as possible, how well a completed project or program (or a completed phase of an ongoing project or program) is achieving the community’s plan. The results from an evaluation inform strategic decisions, improving the project or program in the future.²

What Are the Steps in Monitoring and Evaluation?

1 Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

A monitoring and evaluation plan should be part of the initial project planning. When setting your vision, goals and action plan, factor in when you want to check-in on the progress and consider how long this will take. Having this established beforehand will hold everyone accountable to the success of the project.

2 Monitoring

Monitoring can be completed at set intervals, such as weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc. This should be outlined and scheduled within the plan and the frequency should be determined by the length of the implementation. All monitoring should be documented as this will inform the evaluation process.

3 Evaluation

Evaluation takes place at the completion of the project or program, or a project phase. This should be outlined and scheduled within the plan. Evaluation frequency should be determined by whether there is an end date or the project or program is ongoing.

At the end of the project, conduct a rigorous analysis of how well the objectives and activities went and if your goals have been met.³

4 Report Results to Community and Stakeholders

When your evaluation is finished, a report is completed, and you can share the lessons learned with the community and other stakeholders.

5 Make Changes and Learn Lessons

The next step is to address any changes needed to the existing plan, and consider how the results can inform other ongoing or new projects or programs.⁴

Table 1 | Comparison Chart.

Adapted from (Surbhi, S. "Difference Between Monitoring and Evaluation." *Key Differences*. 2017. Accessed January 8, 2020, <https://keydifferences.com/difference-between-monitoring-and-evaluation.html>)

	Monitoring	Evaluating
Meaning	A routine examination of the activities and processes of a community plan during the implementation phase	A process used to analyze the effectiveness of a project at its completion or at the end of a project phase
Related to	Observation	Judgement
Occurs at	Operational Level	Management Level
Process	Short term and Continuous	Long term and Periodically
Focuses on	Improving efficiency	Improving effectiveness
Completed by	Internal staff, Lands Manager, Chief and Council	Internal management, Lands Manager, Chief and Council, Independent committee

Reasons for Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Make sure your projects are benefiting the community.
- Assess the implementation of a comprehensive community plan.
- Make needed revisions and modifications so your goals and objectives remain relevant and current.
- Inform and excite your community about project results.⁵

Examples of Tools to Keep Projects on Track

1. **Establishing a baseline:** The information and data gathered prior to the implementation stage of a project. It is important to gather this information, it can be used for comparison in assessing the program's effectiveness.⁷
2. **Key performance indicators (KPIs):** A measurement tool that can help determine if your community's planning decisions are achieving the key objectives.
3. **Logic models:** Charts that can help you visualize your planning project. A logic model identifies inputs, audience, activities, outcomes and impacts.
4. **SWOT analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threats):** Can be used to evaluate a community plan or project by identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

What Are You Monitoring?

Monitoring should focus on demonstrating if the project or program inputs and outputs have been achieved.⁶ If things are not going according to plan, monitoring can help project or program staff identify and solve problems quickly.

What Are You Evaluating?

Evaluation should focus on how well the objectives were achieved. An evaluation asks whether a project or program has achieved what it set out to do, and if it is making a difference.

Some questions you can ask are:

- Were there any problems or setbacks during the implementation process?
- What parts of the project went well, and can these strategies be used in other projects?
- Did anything from the plan change over time?
- Are the results what was planned?
- Is the project delivering what it had intended to?

For more information on monitoring and evaluation tools, see the *Understanding KPIs, Using Logic Models for Program Evaluation, and SWOT Analysis* fact sheets.



Figure 2 | Groups of people to include in the process.

Who Should Be Involved in the Process?

Feedback is a major component of evaluating a community plan. Everyone in the community plays a part when reviewing projects. It is important to make sure that voices are heard when things need improving and when there is praise for its success.

Members of the planning team, the Lands Manager, and community members living on- and off-reserve should be involved in the process. This may also include students, Elders, band administration, teachers, and Chief and Council.

Who Will Conduct the Monitoring and Evaluation Process?

Monitoring is regularly carried out by project or program staff, management and the Lands Manager as they are closer to the project and can be on hand to observe the stages.

An evaluation committee can be formed during the planning stage. The committee can be the project staff and management, the Lands Manager, Chief and Council, an external agency, or any combination of the four. External agencies can provide the technical knowhow and are independent to the project. However, using your project staff will build their own knowledge capacity and sense of ownership over the results.

Keeping the community involved will help encourage support and foster their investment in the plan's outcomes.⁸

Engaging the Community

Community members should participate in monitoring and evaluation of work plans. They can provide comments and constructive criticism. Engaging the community will ensure that community members voices are heard, and they can help determine if the project continues to align with community goals and needs.

Some ways to engage the community and encourage participation are:

- Community meetings
- Home visits
- Focus groups
- Open houses
- Surveys
- Newsletters
- Website
- Social media (ex: Facebook)⁹

For more information on community participation and engagement, see the *Engaging Your Community and Using Videos for Plan Implementation* fact sheets.

When Should You Monitor and Evaluate?

Depending on the length of time of your project, monitoring and evaluating can be done at milestones during the implementation process or on an annual basis. The implementation committee should create reports on the monitoring and evaluation findings for council, administration and the entire community.¹⁰ This will help keep the project on track and identify if there is a need to update stakeholders or for seek additional funding or supports.

How to Know When

The size and scale of the project will determine when you will conduct your monitoring and evaluation. The monitoring and evaluation process should be included in your project's schedule with a date and should be assigned to a person or department.

Example

If your project will take a year from start to finish, an appropriate time to monitor could be at the fourth and eighth month with the evaluation taking place at the twelfth month.

Determining Your Capacity

Your community may not have the capacity to monitor all projects. It is important to prioritize what projects will get monitored. Monitoring will take time and resources so you will want to determine what projects you want to assess; over what time period; and if the ongoing project needs monitoring or an evaluation at the end of the project.

What are some types of evaluation?

1 Implementation

A process of tracking and documenting the implementation of a plan decision. Your report will describe the actions that were proposed and undertaken to implement the project. The report should document actions that were completed and what is still needed to continue the implementation of the project.

2 Effectiveness

You can collect data to determine if the desired outcomes of the implemented project are being met. This requires the development of indicators of changes, thresholds, and time frames.

3 Plan Evaluation

Review of the planning decision and preparation of a monitoring report. This report will determine if your plan decision(s) are still relevant and useful. The evaluation report should be done approximately every five years.¹¹

Final Thoughts

Successful planning needs to be responsive to change. Your planning decisions should be framed in a way to allow your improvements. With new technology or new information, planning decisions may need to be adjusted to incorporate changes.

Monitoring and evaluating your planning decisions is a continuous cycle.

Monitoring and evaluating your planning decisions is a continuous cycle. It will help you assess the progress and measure the effectiveness of the plan, and it supports formal plan review and renewal.

Further Reading

Evaluating Indigenous Programs: A Toolkit for Change by Sara Hudson

This is an in-depth report on program evaluation from an Australian Indigenous perspective. It calls for evaluation programs rooted in Indigenous values, and advice to keep up-to-date with research about good evaluation techniques.

<https://www.cis.org.au/app/uploads/2017/06/rr28.pdf>

Monitoring and Evaluation for Sustainable Communities by School of Geography and the Environment

This is a step-by-step guide to understanding monitoring and evaluation processes. It is a resource on climate change and energy written for community led projects. This resource is informative on the who, what, where and when aspects of monitoring and evaluating small to large projects.

<https://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/research/technologies/projects/mesc/guide-to-monitoring-and-evaluation-v1-march2014.pdf>

Endnotes

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