

Impact Evaluation: A Systematic Approach

E-book summary

Impact Evaluation: A Systematic Approach is a practical e-book for organizations implementing funded projects that need to demonstrate, with evidence, what changed because of their intervention.

The e-book starts with a question every donor asks sooner or later:

What changed because of your project?

Many organizations can explain what they did: workshops, training, distributions, meetings, field visits, or campaigns. They cannot always show what changed for people, communities, or institutions because of those activities.

This e-book helps organizations move from reporting activities to measuring and communicating real results by putting a simple impact evaluation system in place in six weeks.

It is a practical guide to building a system step by step, rather than an academic evaluation manual or a guide dominated by theory. The system helps teams improve measurement, organize evidence, interpret results, and present findings clearly to donors, communities, and other audiences.

1. The problem this e-book addresses

The main problem this e-book addresses is the lack of a planned, consistent approach to evaluation.

Many organizations reach the final reporting stage with disconnected evidence: attendance lists, photographs, activity records, or isolated testimonials. These show that work was done, but do not necessarily demonstrate change.

The difficulty becomes clear when the donor asks:

What results did the project produce?

How did you know these changes occurred?

What evidence supports your report?

The e-book addresses common problems:

- The organization measures activities but not results.
- There is no clear, up-to-date Theory of Change.
- Indicators are poorly defined or lack a baseline.
- Team members collect data in different ways.
- Information exists but is neither organized nor analyzed.
- Reports describe what was done without explaining what changed.
- Negative findings are avoided instead of being used for learning.
- Lessons from the project are not incorporated into the next cycle.

The underlying idea is simple:

Evaluation goes beyond meeting donor requirements. It means knowing whether your work is effective, for whom, under what conditions, and with what supporting evidence.

2. What you will build

By the end of the e-book, the organization should have a basic impact evaluation system in place, ready to use in the current project and improve in future cycles.

The final product is more than a report. It is an organized set of tools, decisions, and documents that helps the organization explain more clearly what changed as a result of the project.

Key deliverables

Deliverable	Status
Initial assessment and evidence inventory	☐ Complete
Theory of Change and results chain	☐ Complete
Indicator matrix with baselines and targets	☐ Complete
Reviewed evaluation design — Individual Session 1	☐ Complete
Data collection tools and protocol	☐ Complete
Indicator table, traffic-light status ratings, and findings	☐ Complete
Impact reports for the donor, community, and public	☐ Complete
Learning plan and final evaluation package — Individual Session 2	☐ Complete

These deliverables help the organization turn scattered information into a clearer system for measurement, analysis, reporting, and learning.

3. How IGROW guides the process

IGROW provides the e-book's methodological structure. It makes evaluation an organized process rather than a task improvised at the end.

IGROW stage	How it applies in this e-book
I — Issue / Intention	Helps identify the real problem: the organization has evidence of activities, but not necessarily evidence of change.
G — Goal	Defines what each module must produce: a Theory of Change, indicators, tools, findings, reports, or a learning plan.
R — Reality / Root Cause	Identifies the causes of weak evaluation, including missing baselines, unclear indicators, incomplete data, and activity-focused reports.
O — Options	Provides practical measurement tools: templates, criteria, instruments, protocols, and simple methods of data analysis.
W — Way Forward	Ends each stage with a clear next step, so every exercise produces a useful part of the evaluation system.

IGROW helps readers move beyond concepts. Each module produces something concrete that informs the next step.

4. What this e-book promises

The promise of Impact Evaluation: A Systematic Approach is to help organizations build a realistic system for measuring and demonstrating the change their projects produce.

It does not promise a perfect or highly academic evaluation. It offers something more useful for many organizations: a basic, clear, well-supported system for answering questions with evidence.

The e-book helps readers move from saying:

"We held workshops, trained people, and distributed materials."

To say:

"We know what changed, how we measured it, what evidence supports it, what we learned, and what we will improve."

This shift helps strengthen donor relationships, improve internal decision-making, and increase the value of the work the organization already does.

In brief:

Impact Evaluation: A Systematic Approach helps turn impact evaluation into a practical, usable system that can withstand donor scrutiny.

The outcome is a clearer way to show what changed because of the project and why that change matters.