

How do you evaluate performance?

It's fairly easy to measure the number of children you have vaccinated or the number of community events you have held, but *how do you measure the overall performance of a team, an organization, or a campaign?* It is difficult (but possible!) to “quantify”, or put a number on, things that cannot be counted. When you want to measure something that is subjective – i.e. that cannot be counted – that measurement is called “qualitative.”

- ✓ *Even when there are no numbers involved, you can still measure your work!* This is particularly important for tracking advocacy campaigns.

What is evaluation?

A performance evaluation – whether of a person, an activity, a program, or a national policy – is always partially qualitative. It asks *how good* something is and whether it is *good enough*. In order to evaluate performance accurately and objectively, you must have a basis for making a judgment. After all, what does “good” really mean? This is where rubrics come in.

What is a rubric?

A rubric is a tool that establishes your evaluation criteria – *it explains how, when, and why something is “good.”* A rubric allows you to put a number on qualitative assessments so that you can rank and compare the qualitative things you are measuring over time. A rubric is a scale, but it is not a scale that awards points. Instead, it *uses ranked descriptions to rate different levels of performance*. It provides an overall rating of how a person or organization has performed. Another term for rubric is “global assessment scale.”

For example, a rubric might be a simple scale with five rankings: “very poor”, “poor”, “acceptable”, “good”, and “excellent.” It can also be a detailed, tailored scale with long paragraphs that describe the criteria for each ranking.

Why are rubrics useful?

When you use a rubric, you make a holistic judgment about performance. *A rubric is useful when you need a consistent, transparent way to synthesize a lot of evidence into one overall judgment.* They are particularly useful when measuring the outcomes of advocacy work. Rubrics are often used to:

- Grade student work
- Evaluate the functioning of community groups
- Assess how well an advocacy campaign is performing

- Judge the efficacy of a law or policy
- Rank health centers or health systems

How are rubrics developed and used?

If you want to use rubrics, consider following these steps:

1. **Discuss the evaluation objective and process with stakeholders.** It's important that all actors' expectations are understood and shared.
2. **Work with stakeholders to create a meaningful rubric.** The people involved in the project are the best-placed to come up with strong evaluation criteria. They are also the ones who will use the rubric's results – so it is essential that they accept the rubric as legitimate.
3. **Check that the rubric's criteria are in line with the project's overall objectives.** There is risk that rubrics can alter how people work, particularly when the rubric is used to evaluate individual performance. It is critical that objectives and rubrics are carefully aligned so that people do not work towards their rubric score rather than their project's objectives.
4. **Pilot test.** Have several evaluators try out the rubric, checking that each level has clearly defined criteria, and that the scoring is clear, easy to use, accurate, consistent, and objective. When using the rubric, all evaluators should score performance within the same range.
5. **Don't be afraid to adjust the rubric during the evaluation.** You may have to amend, or add, new criteria after the evaluation has already started. This is perfectly fine and will only strengthen the rubric and your evaluation.
6. **Conduct interim assessments.** Mid-term assessments can help you check for performance issues early, when there is still time to make adjustments to the project.

For more information

- [Rubrics resource page \(BetterEvaluation\)](#)
- [Why rubrics are useful in evaluations \(Judy Oakden\)](#)
- [Using rubrics \(Patricia Rogers\)](#)
- [The River Chart – for comparing data across multiple rubrics \(Parcell and Collison\)](#)
- [King, J., McKegg, K., Oakden & Wehipeihana, N. \(2013\). Evaluative Rubrics: a Method for Surfacing Values and Improving the Credibility of Evaluation, Journal of Multidisciplinary Evaluation, 9 \(21\), 11-20.](#)