

Why use STEPS?

The final part of the EoT course is to undertake a project. This serves two primary purposes: firstly, the project is an opportunity to continue to your professional development. Studying the distance learning material and applying the principles of EoT during the workshop provides a basis for developing professional competence in the field of EoT. However, while this knowledge and experiences are fresh in your mind, you should apply them to a real, job-related, situation. By doing so, you'll have an opportunity to review the objectives of the course, apply them to a situation requiring EoT. This should help you to define your role within an EoT function.

The second purpose for undertaking a project is to provide evidence of your competence. There is no point in taking this course, or perhaps any other, if it doesn't lead to some form of measurable change. This, after all, is the reason for introducing the EoT course. The assessment we do is intended to help you continue your professional development, and to assure the organisation(s) paying for your nomination that their investment is worthwhile.

The attached assessment form is the one we will use to assess your project. It is based on a selection of steps from eot-08 '*Steps in Developing an Evaluation System*'. Although we believe all 14 steps are fundamental to developing EoT, it would be unrealistic to expect you to use all of them during your project. Therefore, the following guidelines offer advice about steps, which we regard as especially about the project and its assessment.

Step 1 - Why Change?

This can apply to both to your organisation and to you, personally. If no change is needed nor desired, then why learn about EoT? EoT provides the basis for making decisions about either training effectiveness, or the efficiency by which it can be delivered. In this context, *Why Change?* implies that there are possible improvements to either or both of them. If you can't clarify a potential reason for change, then you are unlikely to have a viable basis for a project.

Step 2 - Functional Boundaries

Here, our main concern is with EoT, not with the much wider field of the Systematic Approach to Training. Although SAT is vital to successful training, we are concentrating on an organisation's EoT function - and the people who contribute to it. Your initial reaction might be to comment that your institute or organisation hasn't got an EoT function - but, almost certainly, it has. It might not be recognised as such, nor functioning. Nevertheless, it has the potential to be developed and used to improve address both effectiveness and efficiency. What will be important for your project will be to define the boundary and contributors to EoT in your organisation. At present, this might be poorly defined, with people unaware of the contribution they can and should make to EoT.

Without information obtained from EoT, expecting improvements or better value from investment in training is unrealistic. Step 2 requires you to define boundaries for part of an organisation's EoT function, and to identify its key stakeholders. Once this is done, you can focus your attention on a clearly defined basis for your project.

Step 3 - Description of Existing System

Most organisations involved in training will have a system for evaluating training, however rudimentary and informal it might be. Step 3 asks you to critically examine what is done at present and to identify deficiencies in the quality, quantity, relevance and utility of information being obtained. If Step 2 has been done, you'll know who are the stakeholders who are or should be involved and their functional relationships. By asking them what they do, in relation to EoT, or their views about what should be done, you'll obtain an understanding of what exists and deficiencies that need to be tackled. Perhaps of even more importance, you will have met key stakeholders and raised the issues and potential benefits of EoT.

Step 4 - Definition of Key Aims

Based on earlier Steps, you should be able to define key aims for an organisation's EoT function and, in particulars for your project. You need to be clear in your own mind why you are doing the project and, once completed, what will be done with it. Also, bear in mind that the key aims for the project should be linked to the interests of key stakeholders. A successful project is one that leads to implementation of its findings and recommendations, not simply assessment and certification.

Step 5 - Definition of Key Tasks

Although this Step is more concerned with the EoT function as a whole, it's also important for your project. Probably Step 4 has defined several key aims, covering a variety of issues within all or part of your organisation's EoT function. The risk is that you will base your project on such aims - which are intentions - rather than a carefully selected task that is realistic, achievable and for the purposes of assessment, measurable. It's also beneficial to agree this task with at least one key stakeholder - who can act as a champion for its implementation.

Step 6 - Key Information Needs

Having established a context for your project and a clearly defined task, you can now focus on examining sources of information and the systems used for their dissemination. For the purposes of the project, you can concentrate on information that is of direct relevance to the task you've chosen. Nevertheless, other information that has an indirect effect shouldn't be ignored - simply register its influence.

You may find situations where key information needed is not obtainable. This may cause you to review your chosen task, asking yourself whether to pursue your original task or risk losing value and impact by changing it.

Step 7 - Diagnosis of Efficiency Needs

With government's wish to provide 'training for all', and to obtain 'value for money' the issue of efficiency is of primary concern. As you examine in detail information systems and the use to which it affects efficiency, you can highlight potential benefits of interest to stakeholders. By recognising these, you may decide to examine deficiencies in more detail, knowing that further diagnosis is likely to be of value to improving training within the organisation.

Step 8 - Diagnosis of Job Satisfaction Needs

Evaluating training can be done as a purely personal activity - for example obtaining trainee reactions to a course you've run. This will be helpful to you, personally, as you seek to make improvements to the course. No doubt, you will gain professional satisfaction - but what about your colleagues perhaps running similar courses? Are they expected to also evaluate training? EoT is probably the most emotionally charged part of the work of trainers. Some will welcome an opportunity to have their work validated - finding out what trainees think about the course they run, or how it leads to improved performance. Other trainers would be appalled at the prospect.

Step 8 is warning you of the potential consequence of not consulting with your colleagues about your project. Although the aim of the project may be beneficial to all concerned, some colleagues may see it as a threat and therefore fail to offer support. Seeking their support and encouraging their involvement is more likely to create acceptance of your findings and a willingness to implement your recommendations. Unless you can satisfy their needs, as well as your own, your EoT project is unlikely to lead to improvements. Also, if the project is not successful, how likely is it for other EoT initiatives to be successful?

Step 10 - Specifying Efficiency Needs and Objectives

The implications of this step are that your project report will offer efficiency benefits to stakeholders. However, it should be noted that what one person sees as improved efficiency is seen by another as extra work. However, if a sound foundation has been made with step 8, then here you can specify objectives that lead to improvements to training and to increased satisfaction for all those involved.

For the purposes of your project, and in the limited time scale available, it would be unrealistic to expect significant outcomes. Nevertheless, these objectives with necessary support and resources, can direct attention to improving both efficiency and effectiveness of training.