# Synthesis and Rationale: Two Elements of Writing a Good Final Evaluation Report

How do you go about synthesizing three years' worth of work into a Final Evaluation Report of 10-15 pages? How can you winnow down the description of multiple activity write-ups, notes and other sources into a cohesive document that tells the story of what your project did? How do you decide what is the most important and relevant information -- neither too much nor too little detail?

Here are some tips from the team of evaluation specialists at TCEC who will be reviewing and scoring your reports:
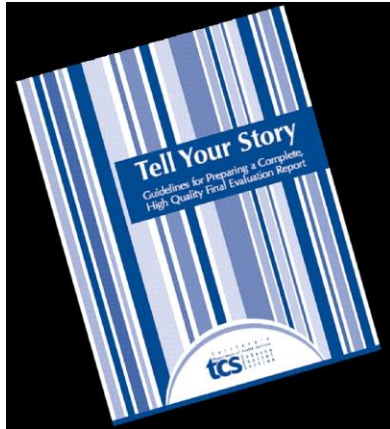
- Lay out the rationale for everything. Starting with the choice of the objective itself and then with each activity, explain why the project chose this approach with these activities, how you selected your sample, why you targeted this group of informants over others, how you determined the sample size, what you thought each activity would tell you. Your rationale should be identified in the background section, intervention activities, evaluation methods and evaluation activities.

- Provide enough description so it's clear what you did and what that led to.   Readers need enough detail so that they can determine whether the conclusions in your report are likely to be accurate or whether some flaw in the data collection or analysis could have affected the results. If there isn't enough information to get a feel for that, report writers have not done their job properly.

- Illustrate the linkage of each activity to the objective and describe how it moved the project forward. It is not enough to merely include a bulleted list of all of the activities. You'll need to show how each activity prepared for or supported the activity that followed (true of both intervention and evaluation activities) so that by the end the project achieved (or got nearer to) the objective. In other words, what was the purpose of each activity and how did it inform the next step and the rest of the project?

Based on the last round of report scoring in 2007, there were a number of common mistakes that project authors made. So that you can avoid these pitfalls, we created a four-page document titledWriting Quality Final Evaluation Reports which is posted on our website. It describes the errors or shortcomings that we often saw in each section of the report, lays out what should be done instead, and provides some excerpts from well-written reports to illustrate how to do it correctly. Working with this document and the example report and rating form in *Tell Your Story*, you should be able to write a clear, descriptive report that not only earns your project a high score, but is also useful and usable for many different audiences!

We look forward to reading your final evaluation reports!