

EvalFest 2026

10th to 13th February 2026
New Delhi, India

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Evaluations in Complex and Evolving Contexts: Harmonising Youth, Innovation, and Impact

1. Context

The Evaluation Community of India (ECOI) aims to foster an evaluation culture and strengthen evaluation capacity in India to ensure better development outcomes. ECOI works with diverse stakeholders (government, academia, private sector, communities, civil society organisations, UN organisations, foundations, youth, and students), ensuring that evaluation plays a vital role in progress and accountability. ECOI organises **EvalFest**, a biennial event, as a platform for knowledge-sharing and capacity-building. EvalFest themes over the years mirror the complexity of evaluation practice, from Visibility, Voice, and Value (2018), Digital Development and Inclusion (2020), and Creativity, Collaboration, and Convergence (2022), to the Need for Responsive, Adaptive, and Future-proof Approaches (2024). Each iteration expanded the horizons of evaluation, catalysing inclusivity, technological integration, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The learnings are documented as knowledge products (newsletters, books, and reports). EvalFest 2026 extends these rich discussions, aiming to address a newer set of challenges arising in the complex and evolving context of evaluation.

Today's international development landscape faces a complex new set of challenges, such as slow achievement of SDGs, climate change, gender exclusion, mounting global health challenges, economic uncertainties, fragile geopolitical landscape, shrinking development assistance, and weaker social movements. These warrant adopting new approaches, deeper engagement, and flexible methodologies of evaluation that generate compelling evidence to help societies and governments make appropriate decisions. More than ever, the role of youth, community, and innovation needs to be harmonised to ensure evaluations deliver meaningful results. EvalFest 2026 will bring together young evaluators, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to explore how evaluation can remain ethical, context-sensitive, inclusive, and transformative in the face of uncertainty.

2. Expected Outcomes

The EvalFest 2026 will aim for providing a platform to interact which will co-create:

- **Knowledge sharing on cutting-edge evaluation practices** in complex contexts.

- **Strengthening partnerships** amongst evaluators, policymakers, academia, and grassroots organisations.
- Deepening the understanding of evaluation informed programming.
- A **collaborative declaration** outlining a shared vision for the future of evaluation.
- A **compendium** documenting learnings from discussions and presentations.
- **Young evaluators** with deeper understanding of evaluation-informed programming.

3. Conference Theme

Evaluation has always evolved in response to new technologies and new voices in development discourse. EvalFest 2026 will focus on “Evaluations in Complex and Evolving Contexts: Harmonising Youth, Innovation, and Impact.” The conference recognises that evaluations must move beyond compliance and measurement, towards shaping change that is inclusive, ethical, and transformative. The key guiding questions for the conference are:

- How can evaluation remain relevant amidst disruption?
- How can youth perspectives, gender, and inclusion be integrated meaningfully?
- How can technologies, AI, and innovations strengthen rather than undermine evaluation?
- How do we ensure evaluations drive impact and learning instead of just compliance?

From these, the following interlinked sub-themes emerge:

1. Inclusive and Participatory Evaluation: Youth, Gender, and Communities

Centring excluded voices, especially youth and marginalized groups, in evaluation design and decision-making. This includes knowledge co-creation, intergenerational learning, and capturing lived experiences for meaningful transformation.

2. Innovations for Impact and Learning Loops

Exploring how innovations — technological and methodological — can deepen impact assessment, moving beyond metrics to behavioural and social change. This involves embedding evaluation insights into decision-making, creating real-time feedback loops, and institutionalising continuous learning.

3. Next Generation M&E: Technology, AI, and Ethical Futures

Examining opportunities and risks of digital tech, AI, and big data in evaluation. This includes leveraging predictive analytics and automation, while addressing digital inequality and safeguarding ethical principles.

4. Narratives and Storytelling for Change

Using participatory and qualitative approaches, including storytelling and lived experience, to strengthen evidence-based advocacy and connect evaluation findings with real-world policy and practice.

4. Organising Partners

EvalFest is the flagship event of ECOI, organised in partnership with the Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi; EvalYouth India; and the Department of Development Communication & Extension, Lady Irwin College, Delhi University (DCE). In 2026, these

organisers are hosting EvalFest at India Habitat Centre (Inaugural day) and DCE Department-Lady Irwin College (Workshops, parallel sessions days).

The organisers **invite partners** for EvalFest 2026. Partners can provide funding, in-kind support to logistics or participants, organise satellite events, coordinate panels, pay registration for participants from their institution, and so on. Based on the sponsorship support provided, sponsors will get access to the event design, such as forming panels and round tables, speaking slots in plenaries, exposure and visibility on branding materials, display stalls, complementary registrations, etc. Details will be shared on request.

5. Structure of Event

EvalFest 2026 will have pre-conference workshops, invited plenaries, sponsored panels, roundtable discussions, paper and poster presentations, and innovation bazaar. **Call for proposals** to host capacity building workshops in the satellite events, call for panels, papers, posters, and innovation bazaar stalls, will be circulated separately.

6. Contact Details

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