



ROOM DOCUMENT 7

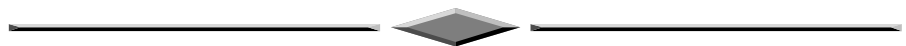
DAC Network on Development Evaluation

DAC EVALUATION NETWORK WEBSITE

Item IV; C

This document presents the Evaluation Network members' website launched as part of the Network's on-going knowledge management work.

This note has been prepared by the Secretariat for presentation at the meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation on 9-10 November 2004.



**2nd meeting
9 – 10 November 2004**

Background

On 16th July 2004 the DAC Secretariat launched a website dedicated to members of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation. The website was launched as a service to Network members as part of the Network's current work on Knowledge Management and aims to:

- a) Serve as an informal forum for information sharing between Network members.
- b) Provide simple and easy access to members' evaluation material.

Current layout, access and content

The members' website is hosted by the OECD content management system, Vignette. As such, the design and layout of the website is based on a standard template – one browser bar (far left of the screen)¹ and two communications items (far right hand side of the screen)². To access the website, users currently require a login and password which to date has only been distributed to Network members and DAC delegates³.

To maximise the site's potential as a research tool for Network members the following content sections are currently available on the website:

- Meeting documents and other key network documents and publications – Links to documents from the 31st Meeting of the Working Party on Aid Evaluation to the present day and the Network's seven publications.
- Details on current Network activities – Links to general overviews and key documents of the individual initiatives of the Network such as the Joint Evaluation on General Budget Support, Partnerships in Development and Review of the Quality of Evaluations.
- Members' pages – Based on the template of the Evaluation Highlights submitted for the first meeting of the Evaluation Network in January 2004, members' pages contain details of members' programmes of work, recent developments and links to the latest publications when available.
- An introduction for members new to the Network – Presents the history of the Network, the Programme of Work and Budget (2004-2006) and details on Bureau members.

The site is currently restricted to Network members only for two reasons. First, up until recently Network meeting documents, e.g. Draft Agendas and Summary Records, were classified "For Official Use" in accordance with standard OECD procedures. Declassifying documents for open distribution meant asking for the DAC Committee's approval. To solve this issue, future Draft Agendas and Summary Records (starting with those for the Second Network meeting) will instead be "unclassified" and therefore available for open distribution.

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1. Currently containing links to the main sections of the members' site.
 2. Currently containing links to "Don't miss" items, the Mandate of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation and a call for contributions.
 3. The public homepage hosted by the Secretariat is still available at www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation.

Second, the website as it stands is a prototype which the Secretariat is using to determine the value-added of a Secretariat managed evaluation website. This particular point has influenced the Secretariat's vision of a "two-term" approach towards the planning of the website.

Phase one – From launch

Since it was launched, work has concentrated on developing the content and layout of the site. In particular, focus has been on maintaining and updating the members' pages. Concretely this requires:

- a) Searching members' websites for latest updates on publications or other evaluation news and creating direct links to these publications.
- b) Searching websites of other members of the evaluation community for events, work, publications that maybe of interest to the Network and its members.
- c) Searching international newspapers (on the web) for articles relevant to evaluation and development in general.

Other work has included:

- a) Ongoing revision of the layout of the web pages to improve readability and user friendliness.
- b) Developing "site" tools (site map, Quick Country and Subject References) to improve usability and again accessibility.

Feedback

The Secretariat has received positive feedback by members both directly and via the e-consultation conducted by Rutger Engelhard, Consultant. The OECD web reporting system also gives statistical feedback on the number of hits, the length of time users stay within the site and the number of documents being downloaded. Of the 200 "special sites" currently being hosted by the OECD mainframe, the evaluation website is ranked in the top 50 in terms of the number of user "hits" and first for the number of documents being downloaded.

Phase two

Making the website "public" has been both suggested and considered. The problem of issuing OECD documents dealt with, the major concern is maintaining a website that has real value-added for both Network members and the wider evaluation community.

As well as members' own sites, a number of evaluation websites already exist and whilst opening the site could initially interest other members of the evaluation community there are two concerns:

- a) The site "dries up" - Without proactive participation and contributions from Network and other evaluation community members. Users do not return to a site that has nothing new to offer on a regular basis.
- b) The site becomes overloaded – Opposite to the site drying up it could become a overloaded with information – more is not necessarily better and would inevitably mean that the information is not so easily accessible with users becoming lost and discouraged.

Moving forward

The Secretariat proposes establishing a sounding board comprised of interested Network member to provide input and guidance on content issues of a substantive nature. This does not necessarily need to be at Director or Head of Evaluation level. It will be the sounding board's responsibility to provide guidance to the Secretariat to avoid the potential problems outlined above. It is recommended that the sounding board meet directly when it has been established, and then on a needs basis as well as electronic consultations.

The current method of proactive searching out information across members' websites is a very labour intensive way of maintaining the site. The result is that there has been little time to further develop other aspects of content and layout. The Secretariat therefore also suggests establishing a list of communication contact points from within members' organisations i.e. webmasters/ public relations/ administration personnel who can inform the Secretariat of evaluation publication releases, organisation updates etc. This will provide value added to members dissemination efforts in terms of additional visibility. The current method of linking publications and documents from members' own sites will continue, so visitors will be referred back to members' websites from the DAC Network site.

Issues for consideration

1. Do members agree that it would be useful to establish a sounding board to guide the further development of the website?
2. Do members have specific suggestions at this stage for further developing the site?
3. Do members support making the site public?