

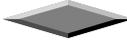
ROOM DOCUMENT

Agenda Item VII. i

OECD DAC QUALITY STANDARDS FOR DEVELOPMENT

This document has been prepared by the Secretariat in collaboration with New Zealand for discussion at the 9th meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 15-16 June 2009.

The Standards have been revised taking into account the discussions held at the workshop in Auckland in February 2009. A draft was shared with workshop participants and comments received have been integrated. Members of the Network now have the opportunity to comment on the Standards in writing. Comments should be received by the Secretariat by the 1st of July. On the basis of the discussion at the June Network meeting and written comments received, the Standards may be further revised, and will then be circulated for approval under written procedure.



9th meeting
15 – 16 June 2009



Quality Standards for Development Evaluation

OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)

The DAC Network on Development Evaluation



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Introduction

Evaluation in an evolving development context

New aid modalities, consensus on shared development goals and the commitments made in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) are changing the way development partners address global challenges. In this new development context, evaluation has an important role in informing policy decisions and helping to hold all development partners mutually accountable for development results. The way development evaluation is carried out must also reflect this new context, becoming more harmonised, aligned and increasingly country-led to meet the evaluation needs of all partners.

The DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation

The DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation identify the key pillars needed for a quality development evaluation process and product and are intended for use by evaluation managers and evaluation practitioners. The Standards are not binding on DAC member countries, but provide a guide to good practice. They were developed primarily for use by DAC members, but broader use of the Standards by other development partners is welcome.

The Standards aim to improve quality and ultimately to strengthen the contribution of evaluation to improving development effectiveness. Specifically, the Standards are intended to:

- improve the quality of development evaluation processes and products,
- facilitate the comparison of evaluations across countries (meta-evaluation),
- support partnerships and collaboration on joint evaluations, and
- increase development partners' use of each others' evaluation findings.

The Standards were approved for a three-year test phase in 2006 and have been revised based on numerous application experiences. They have benefited from contributions from a range of development partners, including input from donors and partner countries on the draft during a workshop in New Delhi in 2005, a 2008 survey of use, and a 2009 workshop held in Auckland.

The Standards support evaluations that adhere to the *DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance* (1991), including impartiality and independence, credibility and usefulness, and should be read in conjunction with those principles. The principles focus on the management and institutional set up of evaluation systems and remain the benchmark against which OECD DAC members are assessed in DAC Peer Reviews. By contrast the Standards inform evaluation processes and products. They can be used practically in a variety of ways, including to inform practice, assess the quality of evaluations, strengthen and harmonise evaluation training, or as an input to creating evaluation guidelines or policy documents.

The Quality Standards should be applied sensibly and adapted to local and national contexts and the objectives of each evaluation. They are not intended to be used as an evaluation manual and do not supplant specific guidance on particular types of evaluation, methodologies or approaches. Further, these Standards do not exclude the use of other evaluation quality standards and related texts, such as those developed by individual agencies, professional evaluation societies and networks.

This document is structured in line with a typical evaluation process: deciding purpose, design, planning, implementation and reporting, and learning from and using evaluation results. The Standards begin with some overall considerations to keep in mind throughout the evaluation process. An annex provides references to related OECD DAC development evaluation publications.

Terms used in this document

The term 'development intervention' is used in the Standards as a general term for any development activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, theme, sector, operational area, institutional performance, etc.

The term 'evaluation report' is used to cover all evaluation products, which may take different forms, including written or oral reports, visual presentations, community workshops, etc.

1 Overarching considerations

1.1 Development Evaluation

Development evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed development project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. Evaluation refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of an activity, policy or programme.

When carrying out a development evaluation the following overarching considerations are taken into account throughout the process:

1.2 Free and open evaluation process

The evaluation process is transparent and independent from programme management and policy-making, to enhance credibility.

1.3 Evaluation ethics

Evaluation abides by relevant professional and ethical guidelines and codes of conduct for individual evaluators. Evaluation is undertaken with integrity and honesty. Commissioners, evaluation managers and evaluators understand, respect and take into account human rights and differences in culture, customs, religious beliefs and practices of all stakeholders.

Evaluators are mindful of gender roles, ethnicity, ability, age, sexual orientation, language and other differences when designing and carrying out the evaluation.

1.4 Adopt a partnership approach

In order to increase ownership of development and build mutual accountability for results, a partnership approach to development evaluation is considered systematically. The concept of partnership connotes an inclusive process, involving different stakeholders such as government, civil society and intended beneficiaries.

Potential partnerships are considered early in the process to maximise opportunities for an active role and increase ownership of the evaluation process.

When a partnership approach is not used an explanation is provided, for instance to safeguard the independence of the evaluation.

1.5 Co-ordination and alignment

To help improve co-ordination and strengthen country systems the evaluation takes into account national and local evaluation plans, activities and policies.

1.6 Contribute to capacity development

The evaluation process contributes to strengthening the evaluation capacity of development partners by: improving evaluation knowledge and skills, strengthening evaluation management, stimulating demand for and use of evaluation findings, and supporting an environment of accountability and learning.

1.7 Quality control

Quality control is exercised throughout the evaluation process. Depending on the evaluation's scope and complexity, quality control is carried out through an internal and/or external body, such as peer review, advisory panel, or reference group.

2 Purpose, planning and design

2.1 The rationale and purpose of the evaluation

The rationale, purpose and intended use of the evaluation are stated clearly, addressing: why the evaluation is being undertaken at this particular point in time, why and for whom it is undertaken, and how the evaluation is to be used for learning and/or accountability functions.

For example the evaluation's overall purpose may be to:

- Contribute to improving a development policy, procedure or technique
- Consider the continuation or discontinuation of a project/programme
- Account for public expenditures and development results to stakeholders and taxpayers

2.2 Specific objectives of the evaluation

The specific objectives of the evaluation clarify what the evaluation aims to find out. For example:

- To ascertain results (output, outcome, impact) and assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of a specific development intervention;
- To provide findings, conclusions and recommendations with respect to a specific development intervention in order to draw lessons for future design and implementation.

2.3 The evaluation object and scope

The development intervention being evaluated is clearly defined, including time period, funds spent, geographical area, target groups, organisational set-up, implementation arrangements, policy and institutional context and other dimensions to be covered by the evaluation. Discrepancies between the planned and actual implementation of the development intervention are identified.

2.4 Evaluation questions

The evaluation objectives are translated into relevant and specific evaluation questions. Evaluation questions are decided early on in the process and inform the development of the methodology.

2.5 Selection of evaluation criteria

The evaluation applies the five DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability in accordance with the objectives of the evaluation. If a particular criterion is not applied and/or any additional criteria added this is explained in the evaluation report. All criteria applied are defined in unambiguous terms.

2.6 Evaluability

Evaluability is assessed to determine if the development intervention is adequately defined and its results verifiable, and if evaluation is the best way to answer questions posed by policy makers or stakeholders.

2.7 Select approach and methodology

The purpose, scope and evaluation questions determine the most appropriate approach and methodology for each evaluation. The methodology is developed in line with the evaluation approach chosen, such as: theory-based evaluation, participatory and inclusive evaluation,

utilisation-focused evaluation, realistic evaluation, impact evaluation, empowerment evaluation, cluster evaluation, formative evaluation, summative evaluation or synthetic evaluation.

The methodology includes specification and justification of the design of the evaluation and the techniques for data collection and analysis. The selected methodology answers the evaluation questions using credible evidence. For the design of the evaluation a clear distinction is made between the different result levels (intervention logic containing an objective-means hierarchy stating input, output, outcome/impact). Indicators for measuring achievement of the objectives are identified and validated according to generally accepted criteria such as SMART.

If needed, an inception report is used to inform the selection of an evaluation approach.

2.8 Systematically consider joint evaluation

To contribute to harmonisation, alignment and efficient division of labour, donor agencies and partner countries systematically consider the option of a joint evaluation, conducted collaboratively by more than one agency and/or partner country.

Joint evaluations address both questions of common interest to all partners and specific questions of interest to individual partners.

2.9 Involve stakeholders from the start

Relevant stakeholders are fully involved from the start of the evaluation process and contribute to evaluation design, including by identifying issues to be addressed and evaluation questions to be answered.

2.10 Governance and management structures

The governance and management structures are designed to fit the evaluation's context, purpose, scope and objectives.

The evaluation governance structure safeguards credibility, inclusiveness, and transparency. The management structure organises the evaluation process and is responsible for day-to-day administration. Depending on the size and complexity of the evaluation, these functions may be combined or separate.

2.11 Resources

The resources provided for the evaluation are adequate, in terms of funds, staff and skills, to ensure that the objectives of the evaluation can be fulfilled effectively.

2.12 Document which defines purpose and expectations

The planning and design phase culminates in the drafting of a clear and complete written document, usually called a "Terms of Reference" (TOR), presenting the purpose, scope, and objectives of the evaluation, the methodology to be used, the resources and time allocated, reporting requirements, and any other expectations regarding the evaluation process and products. The document is agreed to by the evaluation manager(s) and those carrying-out the evaluation. (This document can alternatively be called "scope of work" or "evaluation mandate".)

3 Implementation and reporting

3.1 Evaluation team

A transparent procurement procedure for selecting the evaluation team is applied.

The members of the evaluation team possess a mix of evaluative skills and thematic knowledge. The team is gender balanced and includes professionals from the countries or regions concerned.

3.2 Independence of evaluators vis-à-vis stakeholders

Evaluators are independent from the development intervention, including its policy, operations and management functions as well as its beneficiaries. Possible conflicts of interest are addressed openly and honestly. The evaluation team is able to work freely and without interference. It is assured of co-operation and access to all relevant information.

3.3 Stakeholders are consulted and protected

The full range of stakeholders, including both partners and donors, are consulted during the evaluation process and given the opportunity to provide input on the draft report. The criteria for identifying and selecting stakeholders are specified.

The rights and welfare of participants in the evaluation are protected. Anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants is protected when requested and/or as required by law.

3.4 Evaluation implemented within the allotted time and budget

The evaluation is conducted and results are made available in a timely manner to achieve the purpose of the evaluation. The evaluation is carried out efficiently and within budget. Changes in conditions and circumstances are reported and un-envisaged changes to timeframe and budget are explained, discussed and agreed between the relevant parties.

3.5 Evaluation report

The evaluation report can readily be understood by the intended audience(s) and the form of the report is appropriate for meeting the purpose(s) of the evaluation.

The report covers the following elements and issues:

3.6 Clarity and representativeness of the summary

A written evaluation report contains an executive summary. The summary provides an overview of the report, highlighting the main findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons.

3.7 The context of the development intervention

The evaluation report describes the context of the development intervention, including:

- policy context, development agency and partner policies, objectives and strategies;
- development context, including socio-economic, political and cultural factors; and
- institutional context and stakeholder involvement.

The evaluation identifies and assesses the influence of the context on the performance of the development intervention.

3.8 Intervention logic

The evaluation report describes and assesses the intervention logic or theory, including underlying assumptions and factors affecting the success of the intervention.

3.9 Validity and reliability of information sources

The evaluation report describes the sources of information used (documents, respondents, administrative data, literature, etc.) in sufficient detail so that the adequacy of the information can be assessed. The evaluation report explains the selection of any samples. Limitations regarding the representativeness of the sample are identified.

The evaluation cross-validates the information sources and critically assesses the validity and reliability of the data.

Complete lists of interviewees and other information sources consulted are included in the report, to the extent that this does not conflict with the privacy and confidentiality of participants.

3.10 Explanation of the methodology used

The evaluation report describes and explains the evaluation methodology and its application. In assessing outcomes and impacts, attribution and/or contribution to results are explained. The report acknowledges any constraints encountered and how these have affected the evaluation, including the independence and impartiality of the evaluation. It details the techniques used for data analysis. The choices are justified and limitations and shortcomings are explained.

3.11 Clarity of analysis

The evaluation presents conclusions, recommendations and lessons separately and with a clear logical distinction between them.

Findings flow logically from the questions and analysis of the data, showing a clear line of evidence to support the conclusions. Conclusions are substantiated by findings and analysis. Recommendations and any lessons follow logically from the conclusions. Any assumptions underlying the analysis are made explicit.

3.12 Evaluation questions answered

The evaluation report answers all the questions detailed in the TOR for the evaluation. Where this is not possible, explanations are provided. The questions asked, as well as any revisions to the original questions, are documented in the report for readers to be able to assess whether the evaluation team has sufficiently addressed the questions and met the evaluation objectives.

3.13 Acknowledge changes and limitations of the evaluation

The evaluation report explains any limitations in process, methodology or data, and discusses validity and reliability. It indicates any obstruction of a free and open evaluation process which may have influenced the findings. Any discrepancies between the planned and actual implementation and products of the evaluation are explained.

3.14 Acknowledge disagreements within the evaluation team

Evaluation team members have the opportunity to dissociate themselves from particular judgements and recommendations on which they disagree. Any unresolved differences of opinion within the team are acknowledged in the report.

3.15 Incorporation of stakeholders' comments

The relevant stakeholders are identified and given the opportunity to comment on the draft report. The final evaluation report reflects these comments and acknowledges any substantive disagreements. In disputes about facts that can be verified, the evaluators investigate and change the draft where necessary. In the case of opinion or interpretation, stakeholders' comments are reproduced verbatim, in an annex or footnote, to the extent that this does not conflict with the rights and welfare of participants.

4 Follow-up, use and learning

4.1 Timeliness, relevance and use of the evaluation

The evaluation is designed, conducted and reported to meet the needs of the intended users. Conclusions, recommendations and lessons are clear, relevant, targeted and actionable so that the evaluation can be used to achieve its intended learning and accountability objectives. The evaluation is delivered in time to ensure optimal use of the resulting information.

The systematic dissemination, storage and management of the evaluation report is ensured to provide easy access to all development partners, to reach target audiences, and to maximise the learning benefits of the evaluation.

4.2 Systematic response to and follow-up on recommendations

Recommendations are systematically responded to and action taken by the person(s)/body targeted in each recommendation. This includes a formal management response and follow-up. All agreed follow-up actions are tracked to ensure accountability for their implementation.

4.3 Dissemination

The evaluation results are systematically distributed to development partners, internal and external, for learning and follow-up actions and to ensure transparency. In light of lessons emerging from the evaluation, additional interested parties in the wider development community are identified and targeted to maximise the use of relevant findings.

Annex 1. Related development evaluation publications

OECD DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance

(OECD DAC, 1991)

OECD DAC Principles for Effective Aid

(OECD DAC, 1992)

OECD DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management

English/ French/ Spanish and available in other languages

(OECD DAC, 2002-2008)

Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability

(OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2001)

OECD DAC Guidance for Managing Joint Evaluations

(OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2006)

Evaluation Systems and Use, a Working Tool for Peer Reviews and Assessments

(OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2006)