A Learning Portal on Results-Based Management and Evaluation?

Discussion paper for the Results workshop on 17-18 December 2019, Paris

Abstract

This discussion paper is targeted at the OECD DAC Results Community and is intended for feedback during the workshop session 1 on "What will it take to align to the Guiding Principles on Managing for Sustainable Development Results (MfSDR)?" on 17 December 2019.

On 12 July 2019, the DAC adopted the Guiding Principles on Managing for Sustainable Development Results (MfSDR) and on 10 December 2019, is scheduled to adopt the revised Evaluation Criteria, which have already been approved by the DAC Network on Development Evaluation. Aligning to the Guiding Principles on MfSDR and applying the new Evaluation Criteria require DAC members and their partners to adapt their approaches and systems. The purpose of this note is to discuss what is the best response to meet the needs of members and support their progress towards aligning to the Guiding Principles and the Evaluation Criteria. The note proposes one option – an online Learning Portal – to supporting uptake.

Drawing on an analysis of the needs expressed during the consultation process conducted in May 2019, when developing the Guiding principles and a theory of change, this paper explores the potential usefulness of an e-learning platform combining resources on results-based management and evaluation fit for the new Guiding Principles and Evaluation Criteria. It discusses its potential audiences, content and format, and gives elements related to its feasibility in terms of resources and timeframe as well as the related risks and mitigation measures. It also provides in the annex a draft plan for the different means of communicating and supporting uptake of the Guiding Principles and Evaluation Criteria.

While the Reference Group that accompanied the development of the Guiding Principles has provided comments on a first draft concept note, the Results Community workshop is an opportunity to get members' views on this refined proposal. The Secretariat will then pursue the feasibility study; in particular conducting a mapping of existing resources to check what is missing and identify that would be the added value of an online platform on RBM and evaluation, and assessing related costs.

To this end, the paper concludes with questions that will guide the discussion, summarised as follows:

1. What are the existing tools and practices that members use to support results-based approaches, and what would need to be added/changed to help implement the Principles?
2. What do you see as the added value of the proposed e-learning platform?
3. How would different users use the platform?
4. What is the feasibility of the learning platform in terms of timeframe and resources? Are the risks and mitigation measures well identified and manageable?

1. WHY a Learning Portal on Results-Based Management and Evaluation?

On 12 July 2019, the DAC adopted the Guiding Principles on Managing for Sustainable Development Results (MfSDR). Meanwhile, on 20 November 2019, the DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) approved the revised Evaluation Criteria. These are scheduled to be adopted by the DAC on 10 December, and will be complemented in early 2020 by a guidance on how to use the criteria. It is expected that appropriate dissemination of the Guiding Principles and Evaluation Criteria and open access to user-friendly and cost-efficient learning tools will help development organisations to apply them. In doing so, development organisations will be better able to contribute to sustainable development results, becoming more efficient and effective in collecting and using data for steering and learning, alongside accountability and communication purposes. This should also lead to more efficient and harmonised results and evaluation systems, conducive to more collaborative approaches. As a result, development organisations will maximise the effects of their individual and collective interventions on sustainable development, to the benefit of all communities in partner countries including those left behind (see related theory of change in Figure 1).

Aligning to the Guiding Principles on MfSDR and applying the new Evaluation Criteria require DAC members and their partners to adapt their approaches and systems. While recognising that progress will depend on each organisation's degree of maturity, an initial survey, already sent out to members, will map the Result-Based Management (RBM) approaches, establish a baseline and help members position themselves in terms of where they stand vis-a vis the Guiding Principles. The EvalNet meetings and Results Community workshops will be opportunities to learn and share good practices. Meanwhile the DAC peer reviews will monitor the changes made and the extent to which members' results and evaluation systems are becoming more in line with the Evaluation Criteria guidance and principles, and MfSDR Guiding Principles[1].

Ensuring policy reform and behaviour change in line with these revised frameworks requires updated and more detailed guidance and tools to support related change management processes. There was a strong demand expressed in this respect by both the Results and Evaluation communities as the Evaluation Criteria were being revised and the Guiding Principles developed - a call reflected in the preamble of the Principles.[2]
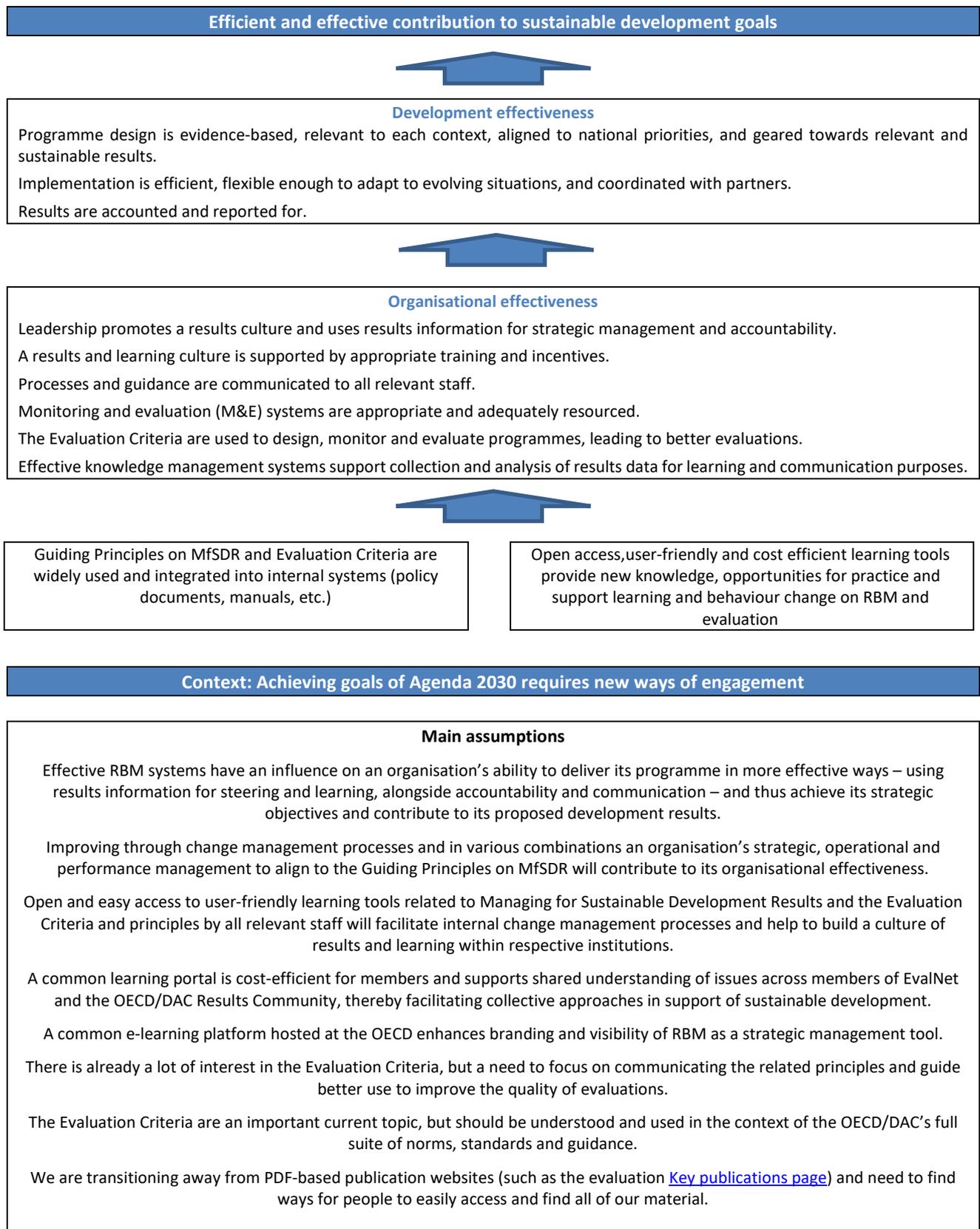
While the Evaluation Criteria have a core audience (practitioners), the Guiding Principles on MfSDR span across the strategic, operational and performance dimensions of management. Both will apply across a range of audiences, including those involved in strategic planning and programme design. This note explores the extent to which, in order to reach these audiences, it will be more efficient to combine the content into one learning portal, rather than duplicating effort and trying to get their attention for multiple learning spaces. The note therefore explores the potential usefulness of an online platform combining resources on results-based management and evaluation fit for the new Guiding Principles and Evaluation Criteria. It starts to discuss its possible content and format – noting that a comprehensive mapping of the existing resources will be conducted to check what is missing and identify what could be the actual added value of an e-learning platform. Elements of feasibility in terms of resources and processes as well as related risks and mitigation measures are included. The Annex provides a draft plan for the different means of communicating and supporting uptake of the Guiding Principles on MfSDR and Evaluation Criteria.

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[1] Meanwhile the MfSDR Guiding Principles will be subject to an independent evaluation in the medium term to assess how they are understood and used, and to what effect.

[2] "*A guidance note providing more information on how the principles can be applied at the corporate, portfolio, thematic, country, programme and project levels of institutions, as well as at the national level, clarifying the concepts, identifying interdependencies and comprising a set of good practices will be developed in the short term. It will show the variety of tools and strategies that countries, development agencies and private actors can use.*"

Figure 1. Theory of change supporting the proposed e-learning portal on results based management and evaluation

Efficient and effective contribution to sustainable development goals

Development effectiveness

Programme design is evidence-based, relevant to each context, aligned to national priorities, and geared towards relevant and sustainable results.

Implementation is efficient, flexible enough to adapt to evolving situations, and coordinated with partners.

Results are accounted and reported for.

Organisational effectiveness

Leadership promotes a results culture and uses results information for strategic management and accountability.

A results and learning culture is supported by appropriate training and incentives.

Processes and guidance are communicated to all relevant staff.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are appropriate and adequately resourced.

The Evaluation Criteria are used to design, monitor and evaluate programmes, leading to better evaluations.

Effective knowledge management systems support collection and analysis of results data for learning and communication purposes.

Guiding Principles on MfSDR and Evaluation Criteria are widely used and integrated into internal systems (policy documents, manuals, etc.)	Open access,user-friendly and cost efficient learning tools provide new knowledge, opportunities for practice and support learning and behaviour change on RBM and evaluation

Context: Achieving goals of Agenda 2030 requires new ways of engagement

Main assumptions

Effective RBM systems have an influence on an organisation's ability to deliver its programme in more effective ways – using results information for steering and learning, alongside accountability and communication – and thus achieve its strategic objectives and contribute to its proposed development results.

Improving through change management processes and in various combinations an organisation's strategic, operational and performance management to align to the Guiding Principles on MfSDR will contribute to its organisational effectiveness.

Open and easy access to user-friendly learning tools related to Managing for Sustainable Development Results and the Evaluation Criteria and principles by all relevant staff will facilitate internal change management processes and help to build a culture of results and learning within respective institutions.

A common learning portal is cost-efficient for members and supports shared understanding of issues across members of EvalNet and the OECD/DAC Results Community, thereby facilitating collective approaches in support of sustainable development.

A common e-learning platform hosted at the OECD enhances branding and visibility of RBM as a strategic management tool.

There is already a lot of interest in the Evaluation Criteria, but a need to focus on communicating the related principles and guide better use to improve the quality of evaluations.

The Evaluation Criteria are an important current topic, but should be understood and used in the context of the OECD/DAC's full suite of norms, standards and guidance.

We are transitioning away from PDF-based publication websites (such as the evaluation Key publications page) and need to find ways for people to easily access and find all of our material.

2. Underlying principles

2.1. Content: building on existing material, ensuring added value and seeking convergence

A number of tools and resources relating to Evaluation and Managing for Development Results are already available, whether compiled by networks or individual stakeholders. A first step will be to map existing material and websites and to identify the different user profiles to ensure the platform adds value and meets the needs of the different types of users. While building on existing material, the platform would incorporate material related to different aspects that are stressed in the Guiding Principles on MfSDR and Evaluation Criteria and principles. It should in particular reflect:

i.   the applicability across a broad variety of situations and operational contexts, and a wide range of stakeholders (public and private institutions with different degree of institutional maturity)

ii.   the needs of a variety of practitioners with roles ranging from strategic planning and programme design to quality assurance, monitoring, evaluation, learning and knowledge management

iii. the interconnectedness between different Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

iv.   the need to work increasingly in partnerships and advance new models (e.g. triangular co-operation)

v.   the need to enhance a culture of results and learning

vi.   innovation in management practices

vii. how to support the feedback learning process on the RBM system itself.

The platform would seek convergence and propose a harmonised content cutting across all dimensions of Managing for Sustainable Development Results, including in particular the Evaluation Criteria and Principles, monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL) aspects, and adaptive management. This approach will help clarify concepts (e.g. impact) and ensure everyone speaks the same language.

2.2. Format: Responding to needs

Participants in the survey that was administered as part of the MfSDR consultation process in May 2019 were asked which supporting tools would be most helpful to them. As shown in Figure 2 below, training modules as well as a repository of good practices and guidelines were seen as most useful. This suggests that combining the development of an online platform to gather a wide range of tools and the continuation of workshops (webinars) and ad hoc training events could be a fit for purpose response.

Figure 2. Proposed supporting tools

(percentage of respondents who proposed the following tools)
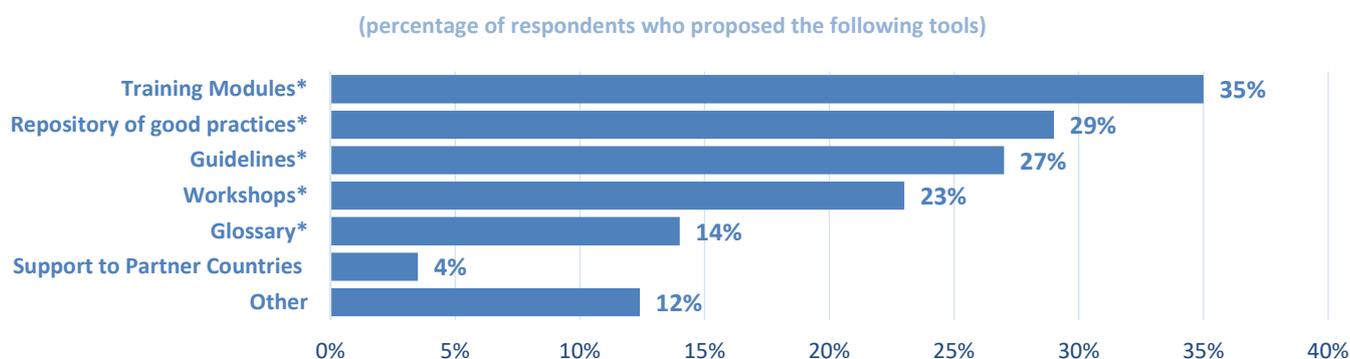
* listed on the survey page as an example of a potential tool

Source: Synthesis report of the online consultation, June 2019, http://www.oecd.org/dac/results-development/docs/Managing-for-Sustainable-Development-Results-Synthesis-Report.pdf

3. Proposal: an online learning platform

3.1. Overall concept

This proposal aims to develop an online platform hosting a collection of resources to help operationalise the Guiding Principles and apply the Evaluation Criteria and related principles. In parallel, capacity development events could continue to be organised upon request from members and provided resources are available.

The platform will: i) present content (principles, definitions, guidance); and ii) support the target audiences in learning about the content and applying it to their specific work, with different entry points depending on the profiles of the users. It will be developed jointly by the DCD Results and Evaluation Units, in consultation with their respective communities.

The architecture of the platform will be developed with the support of a web platform expert, in light of a deep analysis of the needs of practitioners to fully understand potential audiences and their ways of accessing the material as well as their preferred approaches to meet different needs. A review of existing knowledge sharing platforms will also be conducted with a view to: i) delimitate clear boundaries for the platform; and ii) ensure easy access and connectivity with members' systems. This will guide the choice of the type of platform to use.

A living tool, the platform will be a repository reflecting the four building blocks below (Figure 3) and covering managing for sustainable development results, monitoring and evaluation, and, if appropriate, quality assurance aspects. It will comprise a glossary (with definitions integrated into the content) plus a number of learning tools including self-assessment matrices, explanations of existing principles on related areas, good practices, success stories, failure reports and training modules. In a next phase, a scoping analysis could be conducted to explore whether other aspects related to impact and innovation could be included.

Figure 3. Four building blocks

Guiding Principles for MfSDR

(*The six principles have interdependent implications for all four building blocks*)

	"Hardware"	"Software"
Enablers	**1. Institutions** (e.g. norms, rules, governance)	**2. Instruments** (e.g. strategies, development co-operation modalities)
Effectors	**3. Systems and processes** (e.g. management & IT systems, internal processes)	**4. Skills** (e.g. managerial and technical skills, methods)
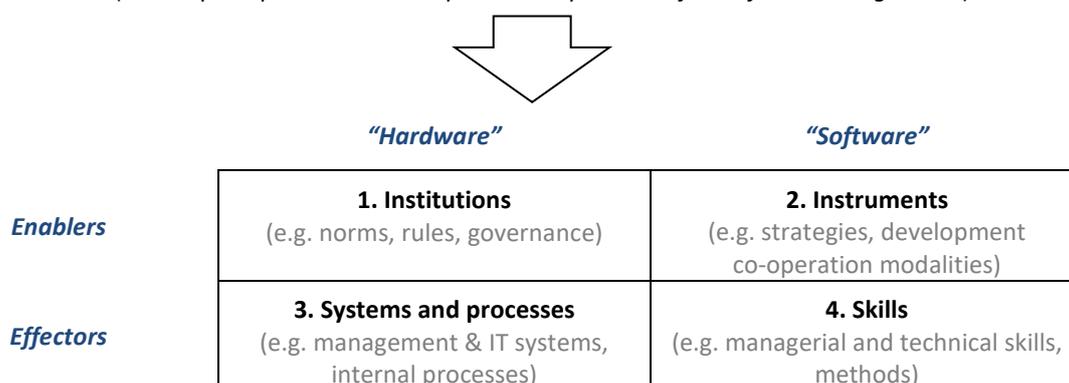
DAC Evaluation Criteria

(*while applying the evaluation criteria and the evaluation principles affects all four building blocks, to some extent the new criteria ask for more changes in the area of instruments / modalities and in the necessary management and technical skillset on board*)

The specific organisation of the content will depend on the outcome of the audience analysis, and be designed to meet different users' needs. Likely, modularity will be sought to reflect the interconnectedness of the Guiding Principles on MfSDR and respond effectively to individual needs. Material will include elements related to the different levels at which RBM and evaluation apply, ranging from corporate to project level as well as national and subnational levels, and to the different "moments" during which someone may be looking for information. It will comprise basic elements as well as more complex inputs to respond to the needs, institutional complexity and level of maturity of the various stakeholders. Links within the platform will allow stakeholders to identify interdependencies between principles. Links to additional resources will enable them to dig deeper into a topic.

3.2. Resources

The **Results and Evaluation teams** (hereafter the Secretariat) will work closely with Reference Groups and specific experts to design, develop, populate and (later) update the online platform, securing internal and external support as needed. More specifically:

- Respective **Reference Groups for Results and Evaluation** will serve to validate the development of the web platform.

- **Intellectual services** will be hired to design and set up the web platform to best fulfil its objectives.

- **Partnerships** will be sought, e.g. working with Better Evaluation / EvalPartners / CLEAR / the Global Learning Alliance on Adaptive Management (GLAM) and other partners so that we can integrate our material into their existing learning tools, and/or use their channels to transmit our content. Links with academia will be sought so that they can ultimately use resources for training materials or certification classes.

- Advice of **experts** will be sought to validate the design of the platform (including its suitability to meet users' needs) and content of specific elements of the platform (e.g. evaluation, adaptive management). These will include experts from the OECD, the Results Community, EvalNet as well as other networks and institutions such as the GLAM and the Global Partnership on Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC).

- Members of **EvalNet** and the **OECD/DAC Results Community** will be asked to share good practices and examples to populate the online platform, and will validate the overall structure of the web platform through testing and feedback procedures.

- **Languages**: The website will be in English and then French, with key documents or content available in other languages (based on demand and subject to appropriate resources). In particular, the *Glossary on Results Based Management and Evaluation* and *Evaluation Quality Standards* are already available in more than a dozen languages (a new edition of the glossary will be published in 2020). We will work with delegations to produce and develop updated content first in English and French, and then explore the possibility of having versions of the content in Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, Japanese, Arabic, Chinese, and other languages, recognizing that translations can themselves be useful learning exercises. Further versions would be demand-driven, decided on a case-by-case basis, and would have to be financed separately.

- **Maintaining and developing content** and using it to support behaviour change and policy reform will require additional staff resources over the medium term. As we prepare the OECD Programme of Work and Budget 2021-22, we will look into staffing and financing.

3.3. An iterative process

The platform will be developed in 2020 following an iterative process involving a series of consultations to design and then progressively refine the platform. Respective Reference Groups for Results and Evaluation will be consulted at the end of each step to agree on the way forward – in particular as regards the findings from the feasibility study.

Main steps are presented below.

- *December 2019/March 2020* - **Feasibility study**:
    o In order to refine the potential positioning and design of the platform; ensure it adds value and meets the needs of the various stakeholders; and assess related costs, the Secretariat will:
        ▪ take stock of the guidance provided by the members of the Results Community during the December workshop to adjust the concept.
        ▪ conduct an initial mapping of existing on-line resources related to Evaluation and Managing for Development Results
        ▪ identify the various profiles of users and conduct a needs analysis for each specific audience identified, creating user profiles and refining the definitions of intended use
        ▪ conduct a cost analysis including staffing as well as set-up and maintenance costs of the platform – elements that would need to be included in the Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2021-22
    o In order to start collecting material and evidence, the Secretariat will:
        ▪ update the Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management and develop guidance related to the updated Evaluation Criteria
        ▪ Define and administer a survey to map members' results-based approaches

- *March-April 2020*: The Secretariat will hire intellectual services to refine the needs analysis and propose an initial design for the platform.

- *April-October 2020*: With the support of experts, the Secretariat will refine the design of the platform and set up the platform in a pilot form (to be launched in beta format alongside the Evaluation Criteria guidance publication), seek good practice and any RBM tools that can potentially populate the platform, select related material and develop the web platform. An iterative process will be put in place to validate content.

- *Mid-Year 2020 EvalNet meeting and Fall 2020 workshop of the OECD/DAC Results Community*: the pilot platform is presented to the participants and improvements sought with the example of one module (e.g. Principle 2/Adaptive management or Principle 6/Evaluation) and tests conducted.

- *First quarter of 2021*: A launch event of the Platform is organised that convenes both Results Community and EvalNet members**.**

The Secretariat will then put in place resources to ensure suitable updating of the content, incorporating new material shared by members and sought on the web.

3.4. Associated risks and mitigation measures

In addition to possible delays (in particular due to procurement procedures), three types of risks may materialise and need to be addressed.

- *Inadequate/uneven quality of material uploaded*: the Secretariat will take proactive action to seek quality material from members, other stakeholders and the web to usefully populate and update the platform, and put in place a validation process to ensure uncontroversial material is selected.

- *Minimal use of the platform*: the Secretariat will develop and implement a communication and outreach strategy to raise awareness of the tools and ensure it responds to actual needs. It will also look at creating incentives for engagement. EvalNet meetings and Results workshops will be used to review the structure and content of the platform on a regular basis.

- *Limited secretariat resources hindering regular updates and maintenance of the platform as well as proper knowledge management*: specific, dedicated resources will be sought in the 2021-22 PWB to maximise the value of the platform with adequate capacity within the Secretariat to receive, filter, categorise, store content on one side, and respond to very specific queries and direct potential users to the right location on the other side. This requires at least a position dedicated to develop the evaluation and results websites and learning tools (including DEReC).

4. Questions for discussion at the OECD/DAC Results Community workshop

Participants will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the usefulness of such a web-based platform and its initial format, as well as on the different users' profiles, needs and type of engagement. This should be done in light of the proposal set above.

1. What are the existing tools and practices that members use to support results-based approaches, and what would need to be added/changed to help implement the Principles?

2. What do you see as the added value of the proposed e-learning platform?

3. Given the audience(s) identified, how do you see it being used?

4. What is the feasibility of the learning platform in terms of timeframe and resources? Are the risks and mitigation measures well identified and manageable?

Annex 1: Supporting uptake of the Guiding Principles on MfSDR

Purpose

As shown in the theory of change (Figure 1), disseminating the Guiding Principles on MfSDR and ensuring that the concepts are well understood and that the principles are owned by the various stakeholders involved in development co-operation is a requisite to see the organisations make the institutional changes and develop the tools that are needed to have fit for purpose RBM systems and deliver better impact on the ground. The main vehicles for disseminating and ensuring uptake of the Guiding Principles are presented below.

1. Website and social media

The Guiding Principles are available on the OECD Results website and were presented in the OECD Development Newsletter in September 2019. They will be issued as an OECD Policy Paper and available on the OECD iLibrary by end 2019. The OECD social media tools will continue to be used to communicate about the Guiding Principles and reach a broad public.

2. Relying on the members and friends of the OECD/DAC Results Community

While the Secretariat communicated on the principles at the GPEDC SLM in July and presented the principles in targeted events (AfCOP seminar, October 2019, Dakar; UNSPN meeting, Nairobi, December 2019), and will continue to seize opportunities, members will have a key role in disseminating the principles internally and in passing related messages at key international events. The friends of the OECD/DAC Results Community (e.g. the regional Communities of Practice) can also be instrumental in reaching out to a broader set of practitioners. Support material (e.g. flyers, PPT) could be provided by the Secretariat as needed.

3. Translating the principles

The principles are for now available in English and French. A Spanish version is being developed thanks to Spain's involvement. Translating the principles into other languages that are used by development co-operation providers and other stakeholders in a number of partner countries would be instrumental to reach out to a broader audience. This would also help stakeholders to have clear understanding of the concepts. We learned from previous exercises (e.g. the OECD DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation) that involving various stakeholders in the language translation leads to higher ownership and use of the principles. The Secretariat encourages this translation and is available to provide support to any member who would like to take the lead in translating the principles in their own language. Once the principles translated, the OECD would give them its Publishing rights and a launch event could be organised to increase visibility. A partnership with the Islamic Development Bank will be considered to have the principles translated into Arabic. We would extend this proposal to other partners.

4. Conducting learning and training events

The Secretariat will deliver workshops and seminars upon request or as part of the OECD/DCD support to policy reform programme that will be enhanced in 2021-22.

5. Using the DAC Peer Reviews and Results Community workshops for monitoring progress

The OECD/DAC Results Community will share practices related to the implementation of the Guiding Principles on a regular basis. Meanwhile the DAC peer reviews will monitor the changes made and the extent

to which members' results and evaluation systems are becoming more in line with the revised DAC Evaluation Criteria and Guiding Principles. Guiding Principles will be subject to an independent evaluation in the medium term to assess how they are understood and used, and to what effect.

Overview of other dissemination efforts to support use of the Evaluation criteria

In addition to the new definitions of the Evaluation Criteria and guidance document, EvalNet will communicate its broader suite of norms and standards material, including the Principles for Aid Evaluation and 12 Lessons publication to make it more accessible and used. Other dissemination efforts include the following elements:

- Series of articles exploring the criteria and key issues that were discussed in the consultation.

- Film and other communication supports (one pages etc.) explaining the new criteria and principles

- EvalPartners E-Learning course on criteria: https://elearning.evalpartners.org/elearning/course-details/16

- Blog series and tools on BetterEvaluation website

- Glossary 2nd Edition and Translations

- DAC peer reviews (Benchmark note)